

**THE
WAGNER STORIES**

**TOLD BY
FILSON YOUNG**

**LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS
1908**

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Portrait

RICHARD WAGNER

From a Portrait by Franz von Lenbach

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LYRIC TRANSLATIONS

By **ERIC MACLAGAN**

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NOTE

A LONG and varied experience of introducing people to the enjoyment of Wagner's operas has convinced me that the process of initiation is generally made far too formidable. The unfortunate novice is plied with information about leading motives and musical characterization till he goes to the opera like a nervous schoolboy trying to remember his lesson, and has his mind so concentrated on details that the work as a whole too often produces no intelligible effect upon him. I would like to assure the amateur who is as yet unacquainted with these masterpieces that all this semi-masonic mystery of initiation is quite unnecessary. All that is necessary is that he should know what the operas are about.

Wagner himself deprecated the priming of his hearers beforehand with leading motives and elaborate musical information; he only insisted that they should be in possession of a brief outline of the story and have some sympathetic

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knowledge of the characters to whom they would be introduced. That is exactly what I have tried to provide in this book.

My narratives follow the sequence of events as they appear to the spectator of the drama; I have told them in the past tense partly because that tense is proper to narrative, and partly because a much more definite and real effect is produced on the reader's mind than is produced by a string of announcements in the present tense. The stories are derived from three sources—from the poems of the operas, from the stage directions, and from the music. And although music addresses itself directly to the emotions, while words address themselves to the intellect, it has been attempted to inspire the prose of these narratives with some breath of the emotional atmosphere which it is the peculiar quality of Wagner's music to produce. I hope that the book may thus not only serve as an introduction to the hearing of Wagner's operas, but may also preserve a faint echo of their charm for those in whom familiarity has bred affection. It has been written chiefly to please myself; in publishing it I offer it merely as a humble opera com-

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panion that has at least two merits—it will not talk through the acts, and it will get its place for nothing.

The lyric translations scattered throughout these pages are the work of my friend Mr. Eric MacLagan, whose help in this and other matters I most gratefully acknowledge.

F. Y.

The OPERAS

The FLYING DUTCHMAN

ONCE, in that world which never was, but which is and always will be—the world of myth and fantasy—there lived a Dutch sea captain who was going on a voyage round the Cape. As he drew near the Cape the winds became contrary and the sea rose, baffling and preventing him. But as the tempest increased his determination increased with it, so that he refused to turn back; and for weeks his ship lay at the mercy of a violent tempest, opposing it, yet making no progress against it. In his anger and impatience the Dutch captain swore that he would get round the Cape, even if he had to keep on sailing for ever. This vow was overheard by the Devil, who was flying about in the storm; and the Devil, taking the Dutchman at his word, condemned him to be bound by what he had said in his anger. He laid a curse upon him that he should keep sailing the seas until the Day of Judgment. Like most malicious curses, this one had attached

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to it a tantalising condition which made it only the more melancholy, for it was an unattainable condition. The Dutchman, said the Devil, might be set free from his curse if he could find a woman who would love him faithfully and unselfishly enough to bind her lot with his and to share his ghastly fate. Every seven years the Dutchman was allowed to go ashore for a little while and attempt to find such a woman. And many shores were visited by the spectral crew and sable ship with its blood-red sails. Often the Dutchman met with maidens to whose imagination his melancholy and mysterious personality appealed ; but when they found out who he was and what was his fate they fled from him in terror. So his life became an eternity of bitter wandering on the lonely seas, set to the melancholy music of winds and surges, with every seven years a brief glimpse of land, and the happy life of men and women and little children who dwelt by the seashore : a brief springtime of hope, ever followed by a long winter night of lonely wandering.

The prelude to this story is therefore a mere primitive sound of wind and tempest, in which are expressed the loneliness of wandering years, the bitterness of the salt sea, and above all the

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voices of the storm. There are thoughts of redemption from the curse, vain longings for the unattainable sweetness that might save from it ; but they are only moments of lull amid the tempest which, with its shrieking winds and thunder of breaking waves, fills the soul with an agonised sense of desolation and unrest.

I

Somewhere on the coast of Norway, where the jagged and towering cliffs were cleft wide enough to afford a little space of anchorage and rough shore, the waves were breaking high and sullenly. The sky was dark and gloomy, the rocks worn by ages of sea-fret, the shore empty and desolate. The waves came rolling straight in from the open ocean, towered high in crests of dark purple, and broke in foam among the rough rocks, filling the world with the sound of their breaking. Thunder from the skies answered them and reverberated along the wild shore, which threw the echoes backwards and forwards in a grand and desolate sequence.

To this place a ship, making for home, was driven by the storm and, shouldered in by the

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rolling seas, cast anchor behind the shelter of the rocks. The sailors, glad in such weather to have made any haven at all, busied themselves in furling the sails and coiling down the ropes, and the echoes of their rough salt voices as they sang at their work joined with the thunder and were repeated from rock to rock. The captain of the ship, Daland, came ashore and began to look about him to see where he was; presently he recognised the place, and knew that he was within a few miles of his own home. He looked at the weather too, and saw that the storm was becoming less violent and the sea going down; and as he and his crew had been much exhausted by their fight with the elements he decided to give the whole ship's company an interval of rest, leaving only the steersman to keep watch on deck. He warned him to keep a good look out and not to fall asleep, and then with his crew went down into the hold of the ship, where they were all soon deep in the slumber of exhaustion.

At first the steersman walked about the deck looking at the weather, and watching the waves breaking less and less heavily on the beach. He was sleepy also, and to keep himself awake he began to sing to himself a song of the kind with which seamen love to cheer themselves.

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*There is wind on the sea and a stormy sky—
My darling, do not fear!
And the waves from the south run mountains high—
My darling, I am near!
My darling, if the wind were still
I never could come to thee :
Dear wind of the south, blow all thy will,
For my darling waits for me !
Hoyoho ! Hollohoho,
Holloho, hoho !*

Although the sea was going down, sometimes a long wave would come far inshore in a bank of solid water and break against the ship ; and when that happened the steersman looked over the side to see that no harm had been done. But it did not happen often enough to keep him awake, and after a little yawning he sang another verse of his song.

*From a kingdom far, from a southern strand—
I have thought of thee alone ;
Through storm and sea from the Moorish land
I have brought thee a gift, mine own !
Then, darling, praise the wind and his mouth,
I bring thee a golden prize—
Blow hard, blow hard, dear wind of the south !
For the joy of my darling's eyes.
Hoyoho ! Hollohoho,
Holloho, hoho !*

His voice grew faint as he sang, and at the end of the verse sleep overpowered him so that he

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sank down on the deck and was soon like his comrades folded in deep unconsciousness. There was now no moving thing visible except the waves and the hurrying clouds in the sky; and at this moment the storm roused itself to a final scowling effort, while the sky grew darker and the waves rose high again. Still the steersman slept on; so deeply that he did not hear the rising storm or feel the increasing commotion of the waves; so deeply that he did not see, scudding in from the dim foamy horizon, the shape of a ship with blood-red sails and black masts. She came right in where the Norwegian ship had come, and, bringing up under the lee of another rock, let go her anchor with a tremendous crash and rumble. This noise awoke the steersman, who sprang up and looked at his own ship. The noise he had heard had been the noise of gear, and not the noise of the storm, and it did not occur to him to look in the gloomy shadow of the rock where the strange ship had anchored. In a drowsy sort of way he hummed another stave of his song and fell asleep again.

A spectral crew appeared on the other ship and furled the blood-red sails, coiling down the ropes and making their vessel snug, as though they intended to make some stay in that place. Their

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captain, a tall man, pale-faced, black-bearded, and clothed entirely in black, stepped ashore with a sigh of relief. He was the Dutchman, and this was his ship that had just completed one of her seven-year periods of exile ; and he had landed once more, wondering if the dry land held any promise of rest for him.

As he looked about him on the rocky shore he thought of all the years that he had been wandering, and of how the weary sea had cast him up once more ; and he thought how he was doomed never to be saved, but to return to the hated sea to which he was fated to remain in bondage until its last wave should break. He thought how he had often tried to cast his ship upon the rocks, and how the sea had drawn him away from them and saved him against his will ; of how he had boldly thrown himself in the way of pirates hoping that he would perish at their hands, but how against his will he had conquered them and become possessed of all their wealth, so that his ship was filled with treasure. Then he fell into longings and prayers to heaven that in some mysterious way he should find the one unchanging love which alone could release him ; but as he stood there amid the dying reverberations of the storm, and saw the fretted stones and

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rocks beneath and around him, he realised that there was only one sure hope of escape for him, and that solid as the earth seemed it must at last come to an end and bring with it an end to his bondage. "O Day of Judgment!" he cried, "When will you dawn upon my night? When will you signal the last breaking up of the world? Only when the dead are raised shall I be able to sink into nothingness. Worlds, come to an end! Endless destruction, come and be my saviour!"

After this outburst, which was echoed by a gloomy cry from the hold of the Dutch ship, he remained for a little while leaning against a rock in brooding silence, and presently Daland, whose anxieties kept him from sleeping long, came up on to the deck of the Norwegian ship and looked about him. The first thing he saw was the strange ship, the second the sleeping steersman, to whom he called; but the steersman was at first only half roused and drowsily hummed a stave of his song. However, Daland soon roused him and drew his attention to the Dutchman's ship. The steersman scrambled to his feet and hailed the stranger; but the only response to his cry was the echo, that threw it back from the rocky walls of the cliffs. He hailed again, but again only

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the echoes answered, and Daland said that the discipline on the strange ship seemed to be just as bad as on his own. The steersman had begun to hail again when Daland saw the Dutchman standing under the shadow of a rock, and he called out to him, asking who he was and where he had come from. There was a silence; and then the Dutchman, turning slowly round, but not moving from where he stood, said :

“I have come a long way; would you drive me to sea again?”

“God forbid!” said Daland. “A seaman knows better than that. You are welcome; but who are you?”

The stranger briefly replied, “A Dutchman.”

Then Daland spoke cordially to him, and explained that he himself had been at sea for a long time, that his home was only a short way distant down the coast, and that as soon as the weather cleared he intended to set out thence. He asked the Dutchman where he came from and what damage he had suffered.

The Dutchman explained that he had suffered no damage, but spoke darkly of himself, saying that he hardly knew where he had come from, that he kept no count of the seasons, that he only longed for the shore, and would never reach

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his native land ; and he begged Daland to let him for a little while share the hospitality of his home ; he would be able to pay the Norwegian richly, for his ship was full of treasure. Daland, much interested, assured the Dutchman that he would welcome him as a guest, and at the same time asked him what it was that his ship contained. Then the stranger, signing to one of his silent crew to bring a chest and open it, showed Daland a heap of glittering gems ; and offered them all to him in return for the shelter of his roof. He explained that it was of no use to him, that he had no wife nor child, and could not find his native land, and that he would give it all to Daland if he would let him stay with him. When Daland hesitated, the Dutchman asked him if he had a daughter.

“ Yes, ” said Daland.

“ Then let her be mine, ” said the Dutchman.

Daland was first astonished, and then delighted at the thought that he should have a son at once so rich and who was also seemingly possessed of a good and noble heart, and he willingly promised that the Dutchman should go home with him as soon as the wind was fair, and that he should have his daughter in marriage. Even the gloomy wanderer began to see a glimmer of hope ;

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for if only this maiden should prove worthy, and could be made to love him faithfully, the curse might be removed from his life.

And while they were talking the storm died away, the skies became clear, the wind changed and blew in the direction of Daland's home, and with merry shoutings from the sailors the sails of the two ships were loosened, the ropes cast off, and they set out for home.

II

Daland's house was filled with the sound of spinning wheels and the voices of girls singing at their work. In the great timbered room decorated with sea charts and furnished with implements of toil and the chase there was a scene of great activity, for the girls from neighbouring houses had come to spin with Senta, Daland's daughter, and their fresh voices joined in a happy chorus above the monotonous hum of the wheels. Seated in the midst of them, a great white cap on her head, was Mary, Senta's nurse or companion; she seemed to lead both the singing and the spinning, and to stimulate by her example both the spirit and industry of the girls.

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The only one who was not either working or singing was Senta herself, and she sat in a great arm-chair, apparently absorbed in dreamlike contemplation of a portrait hung on the further wall. The portrait was of a sallow, black-bearded man, with a mournful face shaded by a wide-brimmed hat, and dressed in black foreign-looking clothes. The song of the girls and the hum of the wheels rose and fell in the room; but still the gaze of the slim, fair-haired maiden seated in the arm-chair remained fixed on the portrait so that she seemed unconscious of all the melodious industry with which the room was filled. They sang of their lovers who were in distant lands or on the sea; sometimes the chorus or spinning song would come to a pause, and then Mary, looking round, would feel pleased at all the work that was being done and would wonder why Senta alone was sitting idle. In one such pause she remonstrated with Senta and told her that she would never win a lover if she did not spin like the others; and then the maidens laughed among themselves and said enviously that she had no need to spin, for her lover was Erik the huntsman, and that they all knew the worth of a huntsman compared with a sailor. Mary, growing impatient, asked Senta why she gazed so long

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at the portrait; and Senta, rousing herself from her reverie, but without changing her position, asked dreamily: "Why did you ever tell me that story? Why did I learn the wretched man's fate?" The girls rallied her for being in love with the portrait, and warned her laughingly that if Erik found out he might cut it down from the wall.

Senta grew impatient at their good-natured mockery, but they sang the louder and spun the faster so as to drown the sound of her words. Then she told them she was tired of their singing, and begged them to stop; and at that they told her that she had better sing herself. Then Senta, still looking before her as though in a dream, sang in a ballad the story of the Flying Dutchman as it had been told her. There was something weird and uncanny in her absorption, so that while she was singing all the spinning wheels came to rest and the girls almost held their breath to listen to her. When she had finished and had sunk back in the chair exhausted, their voices rose again in wondering comment and question, asking who the maiden could be who would prove to be the Dutchman's saviour. And Senta, carried away by a sudden inspiration, cried out: "I am the one who shall prove your true saviour! May

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heaven guide you to me, and through me may you find salvation ! ”

A great confusion followed this strange utterance ; and in the midst of it Erik, who had heard Senta's last words, came into the room and announced the arrival of Daland's ship. The commotion was increased by this exciting news, and Mary, putting an end to the spinning, hurried the girls out in order to make the necessary preparations.

Erik and Senta were thus left alone ; and Erik, who had often before pleaded with Senta for the fulfilment of their marriage promise, reminded her that her father was almost certain to insist on marrying her to someone before he set sail on his next voyage. He spoke of what he himself had to offer—a strong hand, a firm heart, the home of a hunter to shelter her, a hunter's skill to provide for her. Poor Senta, still in a state of dream and bewilderment, explained that she must hurry away to meet her father, that he would be expecting her, and that she could not wait now. But Erik continued his pleading, and warned her that if she allowed her father to choose a husband for her he would be influenced only by the question of wealth.

Following her gaze, he spoke of what was

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evidently an old grievance of his—that she thought too much about the portrait and of the story contained in the ballad that she had sung. But he unintentionally struck a wrong note, for when he pleaded the sorrow which their estrangement caused him, Senta asked what his sorrows could be, and how they could be compared with those of the unhappy man in the portrait. Then Erik decided to tell Senta of a vision which he had had; and, standing beside her chair, he began to relate his dream with a passion and intentness that induced in her highly-wrought nature a condition of trance, so that she seemed to be sharing in the actual experience of the vision. Erik described how he saw in his dream a strange ship drawing near the land, and two men, one of whom was Daland and the other a stranger, coming ashore and walking towards that very house. The stranger was the man in the portrait; and when he came into the house, said Erik, Senta threw herself before him and was clasped to his breast. “What then?” said Senta, whose attention was riveted on the speaker. “Then,” said Erik, looking at Senta with uneasy wonder, “I saw you both put off to sea.”

“Ah!” cried Senta, coming fully to herself

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and speaking in the highest excitement. "He is seeking me and I am seeking him. I will risk everything to share his fate."

Erik was horrified; his dream had been true after all; and he fled from the room in a state of terror and despair.

"Ah, pale seaman!" said Senta, sinking back into the chair, "if you could only find her!"

At this moment the door opened and Daland and the Dutchman appeared. Daland stopped on the threshold expecting Senta to run to his arms; instead of that she uttered a cry of astonishment and stood gazing at the Dutchman as though he were a ghost. He also stood still, looking sombrely at her; and their silence remained unbroken until Daland, approaching Senta in amazement, asked her if she had no welcome for him. Her answer was to draw Daland to her and, pointing to the Dutchman, give her father an abstracted greeting and ask who the stranger might be. Daland explained that he was a stranger come to receive her welcome, that he was a sailor like her own father, who had come from a distant journey and was to be their guest for a time. He possessed wonderful treasures, Daland said, and would not fail to pay handsomely for his entertainment. He asked

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her to make him welcome ; and then, turning to the Dutchman, he said : " Tell me, have I praised her too much ? Is she not fair ? Is not her beauty wonderful ? " And then turning to Senta, he asked her if, in addition to according his friend a welcome, she would also give him her heart and hand, for that he had decided to bestow her upon the stranger the very next day. And he exhibited some bracelets, as a sign of what she might expect when once she was married to the stranger.

But neither Senta nor the Dutchman took any notice of the somewhat mercenary Daland. They continued to stand gazing at one another as if fascinated, and Daland, feeling that he had performed his bargain, and perhaps feeling a little surprised and disappointed that they did not rush into one another's arms, left the room sullenly.

It was the sombre voice of the Dutchman that first broke the silence ; and he spoke to himself as though he were in a dream. The beautiful face and form of Senta seemed to him like the vision that he had often seen in his wanderings, but had never realised ; he wondered if he dared call the feeling that surged up within him love, or if it were only the longing for release that filled him with such emotion. Senta, on her

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part, saw before her in the flesh the sorrowing man of her virgin dreams. Love with her was an offering of herself, a sacrifice, and she had no thought of a bliss higher than the giving of herself for the cure or alleviation of such noble sufferings. From a dreamlike wonder the emotions of both rose to rapture, and it was hardly in words, but rather in passionate cries of mutual surrender, that they plighted their troth. The Dutchman, who was not without his qualms of conscience, asked Senta if she realised the risks she ran in joining her lot with his; but she was one of those who could not find happiness without some sacrifice, and she told her strange suitor something of her artless conception of a woman's duty, and that her highest happiness would be to leave herself in the hands of fate.

In the midst of their mysterious transports Daland returned, and was delighted to find that matters had gone so well in his absence. He told the Dutchman that his ship's company expected a feast to celebrate their arrival, and asked if he might gladden it by announcing the betrothal of his daughter to the Dutchman. Senta, in a continuing mood of exultation, gave her promise to them both, and swore to be true to her chosen lover until death.

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III

Daland's house stood on the shores of a sheltered bay, on whose quiet waters, and close to the rocky shore, the two ships were anchored. Night had fallen, mild and clear, and on the decks of Daland's ship, which was brilliantly lighted by lanterns hung from the yards and rigging, the sailors were dancing and making merry. The Dutch ship lay, a strange contrast, in silence and darkness ; not a lantern hung from the rigging nor a ray of light came from the sombre hull ; a stillness like that of death seemed to reign over it. But the Norwegian sailors were for the moment careless of everything but that they were once more in port, and their riotous song, mingling with the stamp of their feet on the decks, filled the quiet bay and echoed among the rocks. Their dance was the rough dance of sailors whose measures are fitted for sloping decks and staggering seas ; their song was scarcely more than a shouting defiance of the rocks and tempests from which they had for a time escaped.

In the midst of their merry-making the maidens came out from Daland's house bearing baskets

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of food and bottles of wine; and they soon joined their song with the sailors, handing up the food and drink to them on deck, and attracting a good many of the seamen to climb ashore and dance with them on the sands. The girls soon noticed the unnatural silence and darkness on board the Dutch ship, and they invited the strange sailors to come down and join them in their festival. The Norwegian sailors, who had a very poor opinion of the Dutchmen, were not so anxious for their company; but they joined mockingly in the invitation, saying that they must be dead or asleep, or lying concealed in the hold guarding their treasures. And when there was no response to the maidens' invitation that the strangers should come down and dance with them, the Norwegian sailors said that they were all old and grey-haired, and that their sweethearts must all be dead. And they joined in a tremendous hail to the Dutch ship, calling upon its crew to wake up.

A long silence followed the hail; there was no response from the Dutch ship, and the maidens began to be a little frightened. The sailors suggested mockingly that the Dutch ship must be no other than the doomed vessel of the Flying Dutchman; but the maidens took

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this suggestion a little more seriously than was intended, and began to say among themselves that the crew were really ghosts, and that it was no use trying to wake them. Feeling a little alarmed, they handed up all the food and drink to the Norwegian sailors, and went back to the house. The Norwegian sailors, as the wine fortified them, became bolder in their songs and mockery of the Dutch ship, and renewed their hails and invitations, moving along the shore towards the dark and silent ship.

As the fury of their shouts increased, the sea, which had hitherto been perfectly calm, began to move and swell in the neighbourhood of the silent ship. Bluish lights began to flicker and flare on the deck and at the masthead. A moaning wind, like that of a storm, began to sing and whistle through the rigging; and at the appearance of the ghastly flame the Dutch crew rose from the hold of their ship and began to sing in a wild and sombre chorus. They called in dismal mockery to their captain, telling him to go ashore and seek the faithful maiden who would save him. They called on the winds to howl a wedding song for him and for the oceans of the world to dance with him. "Let us leave our sails alone," they said, "for Satan

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has trimmed them so that we may sail on for ever ! ”

As the Dutchmen sang their horrible song the waves rose still higher in the neighbourhood of the dark ship ; icy winds moaned and whistled through the cordage, pale lights gleamed above the masts ; and yet everywhere else the sea was quiet, and the night serene, and not a ripple rocked the Norwegian ship where it lay within a stone's-throw of the Dutchman. Wonder and then terror filled the hearts of the Norwegians, who sang more madly and louder still, as if to try to hide the horrible song of the spectral crew. But it was of no use ; the prodigies of the stormy wind and the glimmering lights, as well as the ghastly music of the strangers, so terrified them that they hurried back to their ship, and, making the sign of the cross, hid themselves in the hold. The Dutchmen burst into a hideous mocking laugh and vanished ; the mysterious wind died down, the storm ceased, the sea became calm, and the night was mild and quiet again.

Senta came trembling from the house, followed by Erik, who was in a state of great misery and agitation. He implored her to tell him what dreadful influence was constraining her, that she

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had vowed herself to a stranger whom she had never seen before that day ; but Senta waved him away, telling him that she must answer a higher call than the call of his anguish. What higher call could there be ? asked her poor faithful lover, than the vow that she had given him and the love that she had promised him ? “What ?” cried Senta, terrified, “did I promise you eternal love ?”

Erik, his voice sinking in a tender pleading emotion, reminded her of the happy days they had spent together, when he had climbed on the dizzy cliffs to gather flowers for her, when they had strayed together in the woods and watched from a headland her father sailing away after he had bidden her give her heart to Erik. And she too remembered, and as hope stirred within him again Erik reminded her still more eloquently of the love that had been confessed between them when she had twined her arms about his neck and laid her hand in his.

But while they were thus standing, Erik beseeching and Senta hesitating, the Dutchman drew near to them unnoticed and heard the words of his tender appeal. Thinking that he was once more betrayed and doomed, he threw up his arms with a great cry : “Lost ! Lost ! My salvation is for ever lost !” And then he turned and hurried

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towards his ship, blowing a call on his pipe. "To sea!" he shouted to his crew, "To sea until the end of Time!" With a face of agony he turned to Senta, crying to her, "Farewell; I will not be your ruin!"

Senta implored him to believe in her faithfulness, crying in an agony of devotion that he must stay and let her keep her vow, while Erik, completely dumbfounded, tried to remonstrate with her. But the Dutchman, without looking back, called to his crew, and when he had gained the deck of his ship, turned round. Addressing Senta with a gesture of nobility, he told her of the fate which he was condemned to bear, and from which a woman's hand alone might have saved him. He believed her to have been untrue to her vow and to have incurred the fate of eternal damnation designed for those who broke their faith with him. "But you shall be saved from that," he said. Senta, running towards the ship, cried to the Dutchman that she knew him at last, that when she had first seen him she had known his face, but that the end of his afflictions had come. Her love, the love-till-death of the Devil's condition, would take his curse away.

Erik's cry for help had summoned Daland,

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Mary, and the maidens from within the house, and the Norwegian sailors from the ship; and they all heard the stranger's last words, in which he told them that he was indeed the Flying Dutchman, the terror of all good men. With that last word he went on board his ship, the blood-red sails of which were being set by the ghostly crew, and as he went on board the ropes were cast off, and the black ship began to move to sea. Amid the woeful cries of her companions, who were trying to restrain her, Senta tore herself away, and, climbing to the top of an overhanging cliff, summoned all her strength in one last cry to the Dutchman. "Behold your deliverer, faithful to you till death!"

She threw herself into the sea, and as she fell the Dutchman's ship sank like a stone with all its crew, the sea rising high above it and sinking back in a whirlpool. And to the eyes of the terrified people on the shore there seemed to be a glow like that of sunrise in the sky above the foaming waters, a glow in the midst of which Senta and the Dutchman, clasped in one another's arms, floated upwards into the light.

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I

UNDER the Hill of Venus near Eisenach the goddess of Love held her court. The cave was filled with a rosy light, and in the calm waters of a lake naiads were bathing, while sirens and dallying lovers reclined on its undulating banks. Venus herself was lying on a splendid couch in the foreground, and at her feet, his head resting on her lap, lay Tannhäuser, a minstrel knight of Thuringia. More than a year ago he had left the upper world and become a devotee of the amorous goddess; and now he was getting a little tired of the endless revelry and voluptuous delights, the mad distractions of the Venusberg, and was beginning to think longingly of the simpler life among the world of men. He lay there in a drowsy discontent surrounded by all the passionate pleasures of the Venusberg; nymphs were dancing by the shores of the lake, and trains of bacchantes were wildly darting among them, urging them to greater and more frantic excitement. Sometimes a sweet

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cloying siren song: would steal from the distance like an echo, sounding a seductive invitation to the soft arms of love; and when it was heard the dancers would pause for a moment and listen, breaking out again into their dance only the more wildly when the echoes had died away.

And then, when the dance was at its height, sudden exhaustion seemed to spread among the revellers, who one by one dropped out and reclined near the entrance to the cave. A rosy mist flowed over the scene, hiding the lake in the distance and enveloping the sleepers in an amorous cloud; and Tannhäuser, waking as from a dream, roused himself and drew his hand across his eyes as though he were trying to realise a vision.

He had dreamt that he heard the sound of bells, and he thought again of the earth which he had left, the radiant sun, the kindly shining of the stars, the wonderful renewal of spring, the night-ingales' song; and he spoke aloud his regret for the things he had lost. But Venus, tenderly caressing him, reminded him of the griefs and troubles that he had also left behind him on earth, and bade him remember what joys he had found in her arms. She rallied him so far that he took his harp and sang a passionate song in praise of

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the voluptuous glories of the Venusberg ; but even while he was singing he was conscious of a revulsion of feeling, and his song ended with an expression of something like loathing for his surfeit of pleasures. Venus entreated, threatened, cajoled him, and once or twice for a moment almost drew him back to allegiance, but his revulsion grew stronger every time, and stronger too grew his longing to see once more the world of nature and to tread the meadows in spring. Even if there were only death for him, he felt that he would pay that price to be rid of the joys of the Venusberg ; and in a passion of entreaty he called upon the holy name of Mary to set him free from his loathed bonds.

As he uttered the name something snapped within him ; the whole world sank away from him ; a tremendous crash, an uproar like the surge of waters, filled his ears.

Slowly and sweetly his senses flowed back to him ; and lo ! the subterranean world had vanished, the rosy scented clouds that had wrapped him in the Venusberg melted away, and he opened his eyes on a scene of exquisite beauty that filled his soul with a sweetness ineffable and profound.

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He lay in the beautiful valley of the Wartburg : sweet woodlands, carpeted with flowers, were spread on one side of him, and on the other a road wound down among the trees and rocks, and up towards the mountain summit. A shrine of the Virgin stood at the bend of the road. The whole scene was filled with the thrilling sweetness of an early spring morning, and Tannhäuser breathed deeply the intoxicating perfumed air. Sheep bells were tinkling in the woods ; and suddenly close by him he heard the sound of a shepherd's pipe and a fresh young voice broke into song.

*Queen Holda came from the haunted hill,
Through the fields she wandered singing,
I longed to wake and to gaze my fill,
Such sounds in my ears were ringing .
So through my sleep the vision passed,
And when I opened eyes at last
The sun shone warm to greet me
And May was come to meet me !
Lustily now on the pipe I play,
For May is come and Love with May !*

When he had finished the song he went on playing his pipe ; and presently there mingled with its dropping notes the strains of a hymn sounding from the mountain road. The beautiful grave harmonies drew nearer, and soon, winding into

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sight from behind the rocks, a procession of pilgrims approached the Virgin's shrine. They were on their way to Rome, and they sang of the burden of sin by which they were oppressed and of their hope that at the holy shrine of pardon their penance might be accepted and their salvation assured. As they streamed slowly past, bowing before the roadside shrine, the happy pipe of the shepherd still mingled with their solemn chorus; and the tinkling of the sheep bells, the morning sunshine, the blue spring sky, and the verdant perfumed earth all combined to steep the soul of Tannhäuser in an emotion to which he had long been a stranger. As the pilgrims passed, and the shepherd boy, putting down his pipe, waved his cap after them and called out: "God speed you to Rome! Say a prayer there for my soul!" Tannhäuser sank on his knees and praised God for this open door of mercy.

The grave harmonies of the hymn, growing fainter now, floated up to him as the pilgrim train wound down the valley; the shepherd had taken up his pipe again and, playing it, walked away towards the mountain. The sounds of the pipe and the sheep bells, like the hymn, grew fainter and fainter. Tannhäuser caught up the

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dying strain of the hymn and repeated it in a trembling voice until tears choked his utterance, and he bowed his head to the ground, weeping bitterly. Far away in the valley, bells pealed a morning chime; the notes of the hymn died away.

Other sounds now began to steal over the mountain—sounds of hunting bugles and horns; and presently there appeared a hunting party headed by Hermann, the Landgrave of Thuringia, who was accompanied by some of his minstrel knights. They saw Tannhäuser's kneeling figure and recognised him as one of their company who had formerly been famed for his skill in the singing tournaments for which the Wartburg was renowned, and they were overjoyed to come upon him again when they had thought he had left them for ever. He greeted them gravely, however, and told them that he would not join them, for in the last few minutes he had made a vow to do penance and so expiate the iniquities of the last year. But one of the minstrels, Wolfram, reminded him of her whom he had almost forgotten—Elizabeth, the Landgrave's niece, a noble and pure maiden whose love Tannhäuser had won, and who in grief at his absence had been languishing in silence and

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loneliness. Wolfram told him how she had deserted the gatherings and tournaments in which formerly she had taken so much delight, and how if he returned she might be induced to grace their gatherings once more. Tannhäuser was deeply stirred by all that Wolfram told him; his love for Elizabeth reawakened, and he decided to return to her and to rejoin the company of his friends.

So the Landgrave, blowing on his horn, collected all his huntsmen and minstrels about him, so that the valley was soon swarming with the gaily dressed hunters and their horses, and the old rocks of the Wartburg echoed with the bugle calls as the gay procession set forth up the mountain road.

II

The great minstrels' hall of the Wartburg lay ready for the tournament, and through the open windows at the back there was a sunny view of the valley. Elizabeth was the first to enter the place which she had so long deserted, and she came in, greeting the hall in a burst of song full of happiness at the return of Tannhäuser and the

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prospect of meeting him again. He came in soon after with Wolfram, who paused at the threshold of the hall and let Tannhäuser go forward alone and throw himself at the feet of the princess. Gently she raised him up, saying that he must never kneel in that place where he had once reigned supreme! In answer to her eager questions he told her that he had been far away in a country which he had already forgotten, and from which he had escaped by a miracle, but that now he had come back to win the love that she had shyly told him was waiting for him. Poor Wolfram, still standing at the back, looked on at this reunion and saw in it the destruction of tender hopes which he himself had cherished, but which he now relinquished without a murmur. And soon the Landgrave and his knights and ladies began to come into the hall, ushered in by pages and saluting one another with great ceremony. The singers who were to compete in the tournament also came in, and took their places on seats arranged in the front of the assembly.

Then the Landgrave addressed them, dwelling on the many glorious tournaments that had echoed in that hall, and on the many stirring events that had inspired them, and proposed that

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on this occasion their songs should celebrate the return of the minstrel who had been so long and so mysteriously absent. Perhaps, the Landgrave suggested, he would tell them his story in song ; but at any rate the theme of their songs should be a definition and glorification of love. The pages then arranged the names of the singers in a golden cup, out of which they were drawn in the order of the competition. The first singer was Wolfram, who gave his conception of love as something ethereal and pure, to be worshipped rather than grasped, and never to be approached or sullied, but to be an object of lifelong inspiration and devotion.

This song was received with a great deal of favour by everyone except Tannhäuser, who dissented from so lofty and inhuman a conception of love. His protest was approved only by Elizabeth, who made a movement as though to express her agreement, but was chilled by the demeanour of the audience.

The next singer was Walter von der Vogelweide. His conception of love was very much that of Wolfram, in fact it was an echo of his. Tannhäuser began to be impatient, and told Walter that he had evidently very little idea of true love, and that if he brought such a timid

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heart to the business it could bring him but little joy. He was boldly singing the praises of more sensuous delights when Biterolf, the next singer, angrily interrupted him, and challenged him as a blasphemer. He also, it appeared, was of the same mind as Wolfram, and when he had finished his song he was loudly applauded by the lords and ladies. But Tannhäuser jumped up again. "What, Biterolf, you boaster! Do you sing of love, you grim old wolf? You can never have experienced what I mean by love; your poor little soul can never have known any rapture, and such feeble emotions as you may have felt are not even worth striking a blow for!"

After this outburst there was something like an uproar; swords were drawn, but the Landgrave and Wolfram between them managed to restore peace, and Wolfram renewed his decorous panegyric of passionless love. But Tannhäuser could stand it no longer; he felt that they knew nothing about it; some of the spells of the Venusberg still lurked in his blood; and, rising in the wildest exaltation, he burst into an impassioned song in praise of Venus herself, advising those who did not know what love was to go to the Venusberg and experience it.

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*Goddess of Love, to thee my song be sounded,
Loudly at last thy praise be told by me .
The throne of beauty in thy realm is founded
And every marvel hath its source in thee.
He who thy body in his arms hath taken
He knows the might of love, and he alone :
Poor fools, who ne'er have guessed how love can waken,
Hence ! To the Hill of Venus get you gone !*

To the minds of the pious and decorous assembly this outburst of Tannhäuser was the most dreadful blasphemy ; a cry of horror broke from the audience ; the ladies drew back in disgust, as though Tannhäuser must be accursed, and as though there were contamination in his very neighbourhood. The Landgrave and his knights drew their swords, ready to punish with death there and then this desecrator of their festival ; but Elizabeth threw herself between them and Tannhäuser, so that they were obliged to pause. Passionately she prayed them to spare his life and, if he had sinned, not to send him to eternal punishment with the load of his sin upon him. They had no right to be his judges, she said ; she herself, blighted as her life had been by his dreadful unfaithfulness, would offer her life to God if only thereby she might expiate his sin ; and she would besiege heaven with prayers for his repentance and salvation.

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Again and again the angry knights would have closed in upon Tannhäuser and destroyed him; but again and again her passionate eloquence kept them off; and presently it had its effect on Tannhäuser also, who, overcome by remorse for his disgraceful outburst, sank to the earth in shame. At length Elizabeth's appeal moved the hearts of the Landgrave and his knights, and putting up his sword he admonished Tannhäuser to seek pardon at Rome, and to go on a pilgrimage with the band of young pilgrims who were now gathering in the valley in the expectation of starting for the holy city. The decision must lie with the Pope; if he would forgive Tannhäuser, they also would forgive him and forget his offence when he returned.

While the Landgrave was still speaking the sound of music was heard on the mountain. The knights and nobles, who had been joining with the Landgrave, first in angry denunciation, and later in exhortation of Tannhäuser, stopped and listened to the sound. It was the hymn of the younger pilgrims who were following the company of those that had set out the day before. And as their chorus swelled through the valley, and wandered in with the spring air through the open windows of the hall, the hard features of the

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knights softened, and a ray of hope dawned on the face of Tannhäuser. "To Rome!" he cried, and with one longing look at Elizabeth made haste out of the hall.

III

Spring passed out of the golden valley, summer followed, and little by little the colour of the woodlands and meadows changed as autumn entered, scattering amber and russet leaves before him on the mountain road. When the sun was setting on one of the shortening days Elizabeth came, as she often came now, to kneel in prayer before the wayside shrine. Wolfram, making his lonely way homeward down the mountain road, found her there and paused to contemplate the white-clad figure bowed beneath the shrine. The sunset flooding the autumnal landscape reminded him that with the decline of the year the pilgrims would be returning from Rome, and he wondered if the penitent for whom the maiden watched and prayed would return with them. The autumn of grief lay heavy on his heart; Elizabeth's love was not for him, and the man on whom she had bestowed it seemed doomed to be a cause of sorrow rather than joy to all of them.

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He was about to descend into the valley when a distant murmur fell on his ears ; he listened, and recognised the chant of the elder pilgrims gradually drawing nearer along the road. Elizabeth heard it too, and as the sounds swelled louder and louder she rose from her knees in an agony of longing and anxiety. Would her repentant lover be with them ? The song sounded more and more clearly, until the listeners could distinguish the words—words of thanksgiving that the sinners' prayers had been heard on high and that the repentance laid on the sacred shrine had been accepted as a sacrifice. Presently the pilgrims came into sight, wayworn and weary, but with faces lighted by joy and faith ; and as they filed past the little eminence where Elizabeth stood, she eagerly scanned their faces and searched their ranks for the pilgrim for whom she was looking. But alas ! Tannhäuser was not among them ; and as they passed by, and were lost to sight round a corner of the road, and the sound of their Alleluia died away in the darkening valley, Elizabeth fell on her knees again in passionate prayer to the Virgin, imploring that she might be set free from the soil of earth and made pure like an angel to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And she laid her hopes and longings at the

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Virgin's feet, praying that if the privilege of death were to be withheld from her for a little longer, the remainder of her life might be dedicated to prayer for the salvation of the beloved sinner.

As she slowly raised herself from her knees and took the mountain road, she saw Wolfram, who was about to approach and speak to her, but she motioned him away with a melancholy gesture. "Elizabeth! may I not guide you homeward?" he asked; but with a grave and infinitely sad movement she conveyed to him both her gratitude for his faithful devotion and her determination to pursue her heavenward way alone. Wolfram looked after her longingly and then, seating himself at the foot of a rock, picked up his harp and began to sweep the strings. The shadows fell from the mountain, night crept up from the valley; a star shone out; and Wolfram, in a vein of tender melancholy, addressed to it a prayer for the guidance of the devoted maid. When the words were ended he continued to play, while the darkness fell round about him.

Soon afterwards a pilgrim, pale and wan, dressed in tattered garments, bruised and lame and leaning on his staff, came faltering along the road. It was Tannhäuser, whom Wolfram recognised as he paused by the shrine. The wanderer,

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faint with weariness, asked the way to a place which he had once known well—the Venusberg. Wolfram was unutterably shocked, asking Tannhäuser if he had not been to Rome, and if he had not sued for pardon there. But Tannhäuser, with a bitter gesture, warned him not to speak of pardon. “Do not speak of Rome,” he said; “but listen while I tell you what befell me.”

“I sought the way to Rome in such fervour of the heart as no penitent ever felt before me. Ah! an angel had cleansed me from the pride of sin; I longed to humble myself, to do penance, and to implore the salvation that I had forfeited, so that the tears she had shed for me might be sweeter to her. So as my fellow-pilgrim stepped along the road beside me with his heavy burden his task seemed to me all too easy; when his feet trod the soft carpet of the meadow, I walked with bare soles over thorn and stone; when he refreshed his parched mouth at the spring, I sought the hottest rays of the sun. If he sent pious prayers to heaven, I shed my life blood in the divine cause; when he found refreshment in the hospice for his weariness, I sought a bed in the snow and ice; and all through the lovely pastures of Italy I travelled with my eyes shut, so that their beauty and wonder might be hidden from me.

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All these things I did in penitence and contrition, to sweeten my angel's tears !

“So at last I reached Rome, found the holy shrine, lay prostrate on its threshold. The day broke, the bells pealed, heavenly songs floated down ; cries of joy rose in fervent exultation from the throng, hailing the mercy and salvation promised them. There I saw him through whom God makes his will known. The people lay prostrate in the dust before him, and to thousands he gave pardon ; thousands were absolved by him, and sent forth rejoicing. Then I also drew near ; with downcast eyes and grief in my heart I accused myself of the wicked lust that had usurped my mind and of the burning desires which penance had not yet cooled ; torn by the wildest grief, I implored deliverance from my hellish bonds. Then he to whom I prayed replied : ‘If thou hast shared such evil delights, kindled thyself at the fires of hell and tarried in the Venusberg, then art thou eternally damned ! Thou canst no more be saved than this barren staff which I hold in my hand can break forth into green leaves !’

“Then I sank down in dull despair and my senses fled ; when I awoke the night lay desolate around me, and far away I could hear the

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songs of the redeemed—songs that now horrified me! The lying words of the promise cut cold as ice through my soul; wild horror drove me away from the place." A fever burnt in Tannhäuser's heart as he spoke of the curse of the Pope and the despair of his soul; and suddenly, breaking into a delirious song, he called upon Venus to come and receive his surrender, that he might enjoy the only pleasures that were left to him.

As he wildly invoked her the darkness became profound and clouds rolled into the valley. A strange, scented breeze blew about him, the clouds began to glow with a rosy light, mad music was heard in the distance, the phantom forms of dancers appeared in the now luminous gloom, and suddenly, in a glow of crimson light, Venus was seen reclining on her couch, and her voice was heard calling to Tannhäuser in welcome.

Wolfram, realising that Tannhäuser's soul was hanging in the balance, struggled madly with him to prevent him from rushing towards the Goddess, but an unnatural strength braced the pilgrim's exhausted muscles and Wolfram was helpless. Still struggling and still calling on him to turn away from the horrible temptations of the Venusberg, he thought of the one name that might have power with Tannhäuser, and he cried

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out to him to remember Elizabeth. Tannhäuser, who had just released himself, stood still, repeating the name and spellbound by the memories it evoked; and at that moment the rosy mists darkened, the phantoms disappeared, and the sound of human voices rose from the valley below. A wind seemed to pass, and with it came the dawn of morning. Tannhäuser and Wolfram could now see at the farther end of the valley the torches of a procession which, as it drew nearer, revealed itself as a funeral train.

The words of the singers rose clearly on the air. Tannhäuser, sinking to the earth, realised that it was the body of Elizabeth which was being borne towards him, and her funeral dirge that was being chanted. As the light increased the funeral train came nearer, preceded by the elder pilgrims; the bier was carried by the minstrels, and the Landgrave with his knights and nobles followed close behind it. The bearers laid down the bier and extinguished their torches, while Tannhäuser, who had been led to the body by Wolfram, sank slowly down beside it breathing out his life. The agonies of soul and body by which he had been racked had worn him out. With his last breath he murmured: "Pray for me, saint Elizabeth!"

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Just then the autumn sun rose over the mountain, flooding the valley with golden light ; and at the same time another chorus was heard from higher up the mountain side. Everyone paused and listened ; and first wonder, and then ineffable joy, broke on their faces as they realised that the voices were those of the younger pilgrims returning from Rome, and that they were proclaiming how God had worked a miracle and made the barren staff of the Pope to break into blossom, as a sign of an infinite divine forgiveness beyond the mercy of men. As they sang they lifted it high in the air.

*Hail to the miracle of grace,
Redemption wrought for Adam's race !
For in the holy hours of night
The Lord hath set his sign aright :
In the priest's hand the barren staff
With bud and leaf adorning well
To the poor sinner's soul he gave
His ransom from the fires of hell.
In every land the news proclaim
How grace through signs and wonders came !
God sits above the world on high,
His mercy is no mockery !*

The mourners, filled now with joy and wonder, joined in the Alleluias, until the whole valley rang with music.

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I

ONE sunny day the meadows near Antwerp, where the river Scheldt trails its silver ribbon, were the scene of a brilliant gathering. King Henry the Fowler, surrounded by the nobles of Saxony and Thuringia, had come to hold his court. His shield, hung on the great overarching tree known as the Oak of Justice, was a sign that justice was being administered, and the nobles and people of Brabant had come in crowds to renew their allegiance. There was a great deal of knightly ceremony, clashing of arms, striking of shields, and blowing of trumpets by gorgeously dressed heralds; and when that was over King Henry rose and made a speech to the assembled Brabantians. He explained how his nine years' truce with the Hungarians had now come to an end, and he had called upon all his subjects to combine and drive out their marauding enemies. But he was sorry to find that instead of combining against a foe his people were divided among themselves; and he called

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upon Count Frederick of Telramund, who was standing in a prominent place among the Brabantians, to explain the cause of their dissensions.

Frederick, a dark, sombre-looking man, stepped out and told his story. The Duke of Brabant, who had formerly ruled over their land, had died some years before, and had appointed Frederick to be the guardian of his two children, Elsa and Gottfried. But a little while ago a strange thing had happened. The brother and sister had gone out together, and Elsa had come home by herself, saying that she had lost Gottfried and searched for him in vain. Frederick at this time had been a suitor for the hand of Elsa; but when this happened he resigned his claim to her hand, and accused her of the murder of her brother. In his revulsion against Elsa he had married Ortrude, the daughter of a neighbouring king, who was alleged to be a sorceress and a sacrificer to pagan gods; and with a great many plausible words Frederick now publicly accused Elsa of the murder of her brother, and asked King Henry to give judgment against her, depriving her of the crown of Brabant and bestowing it upon himself, as the next of kin.

This announcement created a sensation. Some of the people exclaimed in horror against such an

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accusation, while Frederick, who became more vehement, declared his belief that Elsa must have a secret lover, and that her motive in getting rid of her brother was that she might marry this lover and reign with him.

The King summoned Elsa herself; and when the notes of the heralds' trumpets had died away on the summer air, she slowly stepped out from behind the people and took her place before the King. She was slim and fair and sad-looking, and her appearance sent a wave of sympathy through the crowd; especially among the men, who swore that whoever had brought such a foul accusation against her must prove it true on his life.

Then the King asked Elsa if she knew of what she was accused. She looked shudderingly at Frederick and Ortrude, inclining her head in assent; but she could say nothing in her defence. When she was questioned she only looked the more sad and resigned; and at last when she was called upon to confess her guilt her answer was to gaze dreamily before her and murmur her brother's name. Everyone was puzzled; the people whispered together; and the King, greatly moved by Elsa's demeanour, begged her to confide in him.

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Then Elsa looking dreamily before her began to speak as though to herself.

“When I have been lonely and the days have been sad I have implored Heaven for comfort, and my heart has uttered heavy cries for its help. Once, in my loneliness, I had a dream. I saw a wonderful, shining knight, dressed in silver armour; never had I seen anyone so brave and pure-looking. He had a golden horn slung beside him, and he leaned on his sword; I saw him in a wonderful glow of radiance and he filled me with tender hope and confidence.” Then raising her voice she cried rapturously: “He it is who shall be my champion!”

The King could not believe that so gentle a creature was guilty of the crime of murder; but Frederick persisted in his accusation, and challenged to mortal combat anyone who should dare to vindicate Elsa's name. All the nobles took up his challenge, and in the confusion which followed Frederick called upon Elsa herself to choose a champion to fight for her, so that God himself might show who was guilty and who innocent. Elsa, still wearing an expression of ecstasy, said, “I choose my shining knight for my champion, and to the victor in the combat I offer myself as a

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bride, and the crown of my father's lands as a reward."

The trumpets sounded a summons towards the four points of the compass, but no knight appeared. At Elsa's earnest prayer another call was sounded, but still there was no response; and she fell on her knees imploring Heaven not to abandon her. And while she was praying a commotion began among the crowd of people farthest from the King. They saw, far away on the river, what looked like a boat drawn by a swan, and a knight in silver armour standing in the boat. One after another of the crowd saw this strange sight; Elsa saw it too, and gazed enraptured; the commotion increased as a bend in the river hid the strange little vessel; and when it again reappeared, and was seen to draw near the bank at the point nearest to the assembly, the emotion and excitement rose to the height of fever. Not the least astonished among the spectators were Frederick and Ortrude, who were far from pleased at this miraculous apparition.

When the boat drew up beside the bank the knight, who was tall and noble-looking, and was dressed in silver armour, stepped ashore. Turning to the swan, he took farewell of it and bade it return to the distant land whence it had brought

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him ; and the swan sailed away again as it had come. The strange knight followed it with his eyes until it was out of sight, and then, advancing towards King Henry, announced that he had been sent by God to defend an innocent maiden.

He turned to Elsa, whose eyes were fixed upon him in a strange ecstasy, and asked her if she would entrust to him the task of defending her honour, and believe in the strength of his arm to destroy her enemy. Elsa, overcome by the realisation of her dream, threw herself at his feet in a passion of gratitude and affection. The mysterious knight asked her if she would keep her word, and give herself to him if he should prove victor in the combat ; and when with shy ardour she gave him that promise he asked one more favour of her—that she would never try to find out, either by questioning him or by any other means, what his name was and where he came from. It was a strange request ; but he insisted, and repeated it with such earnestness that Elsa, who was ready to grant him anything, found no difficulty in giving the promise that he asked. And when they had exchanged these vows he took her in his arms before the whole astonished assembly, and their troth was plighted in a loving embrace.

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When at last Elsa disengaged herself from his arms he took her hand, led her to the King, and gave her to his keeping; and called upon God now to judge between him and Frederick of Telramund.

Frederick's friends were alarmed on his account, and urged him not to fight with the stranger, whose arrival had suggested the influence of supernatural powers, but Frederick, who during the last few minutes had been gazing furiously at the stranger, was mastered by his jealous anger and announced his determination to fight.

Then the preliminaries of the combat were arranged. At the command of the King three Saxon nobles stood out for the stranger and three Brabantians for Frederick; these six nobles, first solemnly measuring out the ground, marked out a complete circle by driving their spears into the earth. Then, when the Herald had proclaimed the conditions of the combat, Frederick and the stranger took their places outside the circle and declared their trust in Heaven. The King, stepping into the centre, invoked the help of God for the innocent, and his vengeance on the guilty, while all the people bared their heads and listened devoutly.

When this ceremony was over the trumpeters

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blew the call for battle ; the King drew his sword and, standing beside the Oak of Justice, struck three sonorous blows against the shield that hung upon it. At the first stroke the combatants stepped into the circle ; at the second, they advanced their shields and drew their swords ; at the third they joined in combat, the strange knight attacking and Telramund defending. Almost at once, however, the stranger, with a mighty stroke, felled Telramund to the earth ; he tried to raise himself, but after staggering a few steps backwards, fell to the ground again. He was now completely at the mercy of the stranger, the point of whose sword was almost resting on Telramund's throat. But the shining knight, releasing his victim, said : " God has given your life into my hands ; I give it back to you for repentance."

Drawn swords were returned to their scabbards and spears were taken out of the ground, while the whole populace hailed the victorious hero. Elsa, running forward, was clasped in the stranger's arms, while the King, who was overjoyed at the issue of the combat, ordered the minstrels to intone a lay of pleasure. Frederick dragged himself to the feet of Ortrude, who had been gazing darkly and fixedly at the victorious

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knight, asking herself who this stranger was who had overcome her power and defeated her husband. But for the moment these plotters were forgotten. Boys and young men ran forward and, throwing brightly coloured mantles over two shields, raised the stranger and Elsa shoulder-high upon them, and bore them away amid shouts and songs of joy.

II

In the darkness of night, beneath the shadow of the great minster at Antwerp, two figures were crouching on the flight of stone steps leading to the door. They seemed to be watching the windows of the palace opposite, which were brightly illuminated, and from which could be heard the sounds of music and merry-making. The two figures were Ortrude and Frederick, no longer proud and resplendent, but dressed in dark garments of service and evidently fallen upon unhappy times.

They began to speak to one another, Frederick urging Ortrude to rouse herself and flee with him before daybreak, Ortrude answering that the festivities of her enemies held her spell-bound,

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and that she could not tear herself away. Frederick began to accuse her of bringing him to a position of shame and disgrace; and soon they were busy quarrelling, and taxing one another with all kinds of infamies. Ortrude laughed at Frederick's superstitious belief in heaven and called him a coward, saying that she still knew of a spell that would overthrow their enemy and restore them to power. Frederick was frightened; he felt the power of Ortrude's old fascination; and presently, pointing to the palace, where the lights were now extinguished, she called him to her side and said that she would tell him what the stars revealed to her. She told him that if the stranger could be compelled to reveal his name and where he came from his power and strength would vanish. That, she explained, was the reason why he had exacted the strange promise from Elsa. No one except Elsa herself would have the power to draw the secret from him, and therefore it would be necessary to work on Elsa's mind and try to rouse in it suspicions of her bridegroom, so that for her own peace of mind she would implore him to tell her the truth. Frederick was greatly impressed by all this; it made him angry to think that he had been defeated by sorcery, and he thought that if only

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he could avengè himself his honour would be restored.

Presently in the women's apartments of the palace a door leading on to the balcony opened, and Elsa, dressed in white, came out. She began to sing to herself of her love ; of the wandering breezes that heard her prayer when there was no one else to hear ; of the stormy waves through which her lover had been guided to her ; and of the hot blushes of love on her cheeks which she prayed the night breezes to cool. The man and woman crouching on the steps in the waning darkness heard her singing ; and Ortrude sent Frederick away, saying that the strange knight was his prey, but that Elsa should be hers.

Then attracting Elsa's attention, she began to speak plaintively, saying that she had never harmed Elsa, that her life had been a miserable one, and that she had lived joylessly in solitude, mourning the evil fortunes of her race. Frederick, she said, had been the victim of a wild delusion when he had accused Elsa of fratricide, but now he was consumed with remorse and craved for her forgiveness. Ortrude contrasted her own wretched condition with Elsa's happy one ; in a word, she so worked upon the girl's feelings that Elsa came down to her and, shocked at the sight

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of Ortrude's lonely and degraded condition, freely pardoned her, and even herself asked pardon for any sorrow that she might have caused. In the generosity of her heart she promised to intercede with her bridegroom on Frederick's behalf, and invited Ortrude to her wedding on the following day.

This was Ortrude's opportunity, and she began to sow insidious seeds of poison in Elsa's mind with regard to her mysterious bridegroom. "Do not trust too blindly in this strange lover," she said. "His magic arts have perhaps cast a glamour over you, but the same witchcraft that brought him to you may take him back again." But Elsa's loyal heart could only discover pity for one who could be so ignorant of her knight's nobility. Pure and unsuspecting, her one desire was to make Ortrude as happy as she was herself. She begged the unhappy woman to stay with her and learn, instead of her dark pagan philosophy, the faith that made trusting a happiness; and as the day was beginning to break and the pale roses of dawn were opening in the sky she led Ortrude away with her to her apartments in the palace.

But the seed had been sown, and Frederick, stealing back again out of the shadows, vowed

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destruction to his conqueror. Then he hid himself behind a buttress of the minster, and, sullenly, as the dawn broke, watched the great castle and palace returning to the life of another day. First the reveille was sounded from a near turret and answered from a distant one, and for some time the golden tones of the trumpets echoed about among the battlements and matched the splendours of the morning sky. Then warders came and unlocked the great gates; servants from the castle entered the courtyard from various doors and began to draw water from the wells and carry it into the palace in metal vessels; and a little later the royal trumpeters came out from the palace and blew a summons, which was answered by the nobles and retainers who came crowding into the courtyard.

When they had assembled a herald came out from the palace and announced the King's decree: that a ban had been laid upon Frederick, Count of Telramund, and that whoever should befriend him should share his fate. He also proclaimed that the noble stranger, Elsa's bridegroom, had refused the title of Duke, and preferred to be called the Protector of Brabant. Almost the whole company loudly expressed

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their loyal approval ; but a little group of four nobles, who had formerly been lieges of Frederick, stood together in front of the minster and did not join in the general rejoicings. Frederick saw them from his place of concealment, and came forward and joined them ; he promised to expose the stranger and to restore himself and his friends to power.

Their conference was interrupted, however, by the arrival of pages announcing that Elsa's procession was about to start for the minster ; and as the people formed into two ranks, a long train of ladies, magnificently attired, came slowly from the palace and grouped themselves on the steps of the church. And then, greeted by a joyful chorus, Elsa herself appeared with her attendants. She stepped quietly and proudly forward to the festival sounds of music and cheers ; but just as she had placed her foot on the steps of the minster, Ortrude, who had been at the back of the procession, ran suddenly forward and, placing herself on the same step, barred Elsa's progress. "Stand back, Elsa !" she cried ; "I will follow you like a slave no longer ! You shall yield place to me ! You shall grovel in the dust before me !"

Everyone was astonished by this outburst, Elsa

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most of all ; and for a time the air was filled with a medley of voices, some expressing amazement, others anger, Elsa bewailing Ortrude's falseness, and Ortrude, now entirely uncontrolled, vilifying the strange knight and proclaiming that her husband Frederick had been unjustly banned. Why did they make so much of this strange knight, she asked ? What was his name ? what was his race or lineage ? where did he come from ? how was it that he had forbidden questions like these to be asked ?

Then Elsa, partly recovered from her amazement, called upon Ortrude to cease her taunts, and affirmed her unending belief in the honour and purity of her knight. And while the tumult was at its height the trumpets sounded again, and a procession of nobles headed by the King and the bridegroom, came towards the minster. But their stately formality was destroyed when they saw the confusion in Elsa's procession. She, as soon as she saw her bridegroom, threw herself into his arms, while he and the King asked in amazement what was the meaning of the uproar, and how it was that Ortrude was with Elsa ? When Elsa had given her explanation the knight turned to Ortrude and ordered her harshly away ; and then, pointing to the minster, said tenderly

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to his bride : "Come, let your tears vanish there in joy !'

The procession was then hastily re-formed, and was again about to enter the minster, when Frederick stepped forward on the steps and called on the King and nobles to stop. The King ordered his retainers to close in on the outlaw, but Frederick, fixing his gaze on the strange knight, accused him deliberately of sorcery, and called upon him to reveal his name and so break the spell. The knight answered scornfully that Frederick had been proved false by him and that his accusation could harm no one, but as Frederick went on with his crafty accusations, the stranger saw to his dismay that the treacherous words were having an effect on his bride. She was miserable, reproaching herself for doubting, calling herself ungrateful, but wishing that she knew the secret, which she would guard as carefully as the stranger himself. The King and his followers proclaimed their faith in him, and the nobles, crowding round him, laid their hands in his as a token of fidelity and trust ; but while they were doing so Frederick pushed his way towards Elsa and speaking rapidly to her in a low voice, urged her to let him wound the stranger, if only with a prick deep

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enough to draw a single drop of blood, for that then he would declare his secret and never leave her side. Elsa, torn by doubt, begged him not to tempt her, but Frederick told her he would be near her that night, and if she needed him he would come and solve her doubts for her.

The stranger, seeing Frederick addressing Elsa, turned towards them and ordered him away, at the same time tenderly raising his bride, who had sunk overwhelmed at his feet. Looking into her eyes he asked her if she could really doubt him, and out of the medley of her feelings her faith in him rose clear again. "My hero! My deliverer! My love for you stands high beyond the reach of doubt!" she cried; and once more, this time with firm steps, they approached the minster. As they were passing into the gloom of the doorway Elsa caught sight of Ortrude, whose arm was lifted against her with a gesture of triumph and malice. The terrified girl, seized once more with doubt, turned her face away; and as the procession passed into the minster the solemn sounds of the organ stole out from its gloomy shadows and filled the sunny spaces of the courtyard.

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III

At last the wedding festivities, which had lasted far into the night, were all over, and the bride and bridegroom were led in procession to their richly decorated bridal chamber in the palace. The attendants ushered them into one another's presence singing this song :

*Follow the way, surely we guide,
Hither where rapture of love is your share :
Might of the man, grace of the bride,
True be the union that blesses the pair !
Fear not to follow, champion of truth :
Fear not to follow, glory of youth !
Splendour and music of feasting are over :
Joy be your portion, lover with lover !*

*Fragrant the room and decked for delight,
Now it receives you, gladdening your sight.
Follow the way, surely we guide,
Hither where rapture of love is your share :
Might of the man, grace of the bride,
True be the union that blesses the pair !*

The ladies unclasped Elsa's heavy bridal cloak, the pages took the bridegroom's royal mantle from him ; and then the ladies walked round the lovers where they stood, singing a little song of good wishes. "As God has dedicated you to

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each other," they sang, "we dedicate you now to joy"; and then, passing round them once more, they sang: "Remember this hour when love's sad day shall come." And then they departed, and the singing died away down the long corridors.

It does not much matter what lovers say to one another in their hours of happiness; words are only used to make the music of their souls articulate; and Elsa and her lover, clasped in one another's arms by the oriel window, spoke no more wisely and no more foolishly than hundreds and thousands of lovers have spoken since the world began. But gradually, as their first emotion calmed down, and the bridegroom pronounced Elsa's name in loving accents, her old wistful feeling returned, and with it a longing that she might also pronounce his name in those same tones of love and tenderness. When she told him of her wish he drew her to his arms and pointed through the open casement to the flowery close below. "Surely you do not seek to know whence come the beauty and heavenly perfume of those flowers?" And then he reminded her how he had loved and trusted her without question, although base suspicions had been cast upon her.

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But poor Elsa, like so many other people, valued all she had and knew as nothing compared with what she did not know. She wished that her bridegroom were in pain, so that she might tend and comfort him; she wished that he were in danger, so that she might prove her devotion by giving her life for him. But the one thing he had asked of her she found hard to do—to abstain from asking him his name. As she more and more clearly betrayed her longing, he implored her to let love be enough for her, as it was for him; said that he had willingly for her sake resigned a condition higher even than that of kings, and a glory more great than any earthly glory. But Elsa grew almost delirious, and thought she saw the swan coming to take her knight away from her again; and at last she said that she could have no peace until she knew his name and the country from whence he came.

Suddenly she started away from him; a door at the back of the chamber was burst open, and Frederick and the four nobles with whom he had conspired rushed in with drawn swords. With a cry Elsa handed her husband his sword, which lay by the side of the couch, and with one swift blow he struck Telramund dead to the ground. The four nobles showed their cowardice by sur-

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rendering immediately, while Elsa fainted and sank to the ground.

He who had been so short a time before filled with the rapture of the bridegroom now stood dismayed amid the ruins of his happiness. Elsa, opening her eyes, faintly murmured a prayer to God for mercy, while at a sign from her husband the four nobles rose and bore away Frederick's corpse to the King's judgment hall. Two of Elsa's attendants, roused by the commotion, immediately came in, and the sorrowful bridegroom commanded them to lead Elsa in her bridal robes into the King's presence, where her fatal question should be answered. Sadly and slowly they all departed from the chamber, into the silence and loneliness of which the cold dawn glided with stealthy footsteps.

Once more on the banks of the Scheldt, early in the morning following Elsa's wedding, the nobles were assembled round the banner of the King. They were getting ready to set forth united against their common enemies, and when they had assembled, each with his shield and spear and banner, the King himself arrived and proudly greeted his brave retinue. He had

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hardly finished speaking when the four nobles bearing Telramund's body arrived, soon followed by Elsa, who, attended by her ladies, approached the King with faltering steps.

Her sadness, as well as the presence of Frederick's dead body, caused the utmost consternation, but Elsa would give no explanation of her strange appearance. Presently her husband, fully clad in his silver armour, strode solemnly into the midst of the assembly; and there, in answer to the King's greeting, he announced that he could no longer lead his people to the wars. Solemnly uncovering the corpse of Telramund he called all to witness that, since Telramund had come in the night to overpower him, he had a right to slay him. And then, turning to Elsa, he announced that although she had promised never to question him she had broken her vow; therefore, although he had begged her not to persist, he would now answer her question.

His face began to glow with a strange exaltation as he spoke. "Before all the world, the King and the State, I now truthfully reveal my secret. You shall hear if I am not as noble as yourselves." And then, amid a profound silence he told them how in a far-away country, on a mountain inaccessible by mortal feet, and built

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into the heart of a splendid castle, there was a temple that for splendour and glory had no equal in the world. Within this temple there was a costly vessel, which had been brought there by a cloud of angels, to remain for ever in the keeping of knights of the purest and loftiest nature. This vessel, which was called the Holy Grail, was the seat of a divine influence that was every year renewed in it by the descent of a dove from heaven. Those who served the Grail were gifted with an immortal power, but they held it only so long as they kept sacred its secret; they might mingle with men only on condition that their divine quality remained unknown. "Now hear my answer to the forbidden question. I was sent to you from the Grail; my father Parsifal reigns in that temple; I am his Knight, and my name is Lohengrin!"

This solemn announcement filled the assembly with awe and reverence. Elsa, utterly overcome by grief, and understanding the extent of her offending, implored Lohengrin to stay and help her in any possible way to expiate her sin; but in vain. Lohengrin said that he had already been too long away from the Grail; all he could do would be to leave a blessing with the King who had received him so nobly and with such confidence. In return

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for that he promised that German soil should never be desecrated by the invasion of an enemy.

At this moment a commotion arose among the people near the river bank; they saw the swan, as they had seen it before, sailing slowly along the river and drawing a boat behind it. As it drew near Lohengrin greeted the swan sorrowfully, expressing his grief that it should return to him like this, when he had hoped to see it under different conditions, and set free from the charm that now enslaved it. Then he turned to Elsa, and told her how he had once hoped to restore her lost brother to her; but that this happiness had been denied him. If she should ever see her brother again, however, she was to give him Lohengrin's horn, his sword, and his ring; the horn for him to sound in the hour of danger, the sword, because possession of it would make him unconquerable, and the ring as a reminder of one who came to be the champion of the innocent. Passionately he embraced Elsa, who was stupefied by her grief; and solemnly taking farewell of the King, he turned to the bank.

At that moment Ortrude appeared, and in a jeering voice called to Lohengrin, bidding him make haste, and saying that his foolish bride should now hear how Ortrude herself had en-

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chanted Elsa's brother and turned him into the swan who swam there on the river, the true heir of Brabant. If Lohengrin had only remained for a year, she added, he would have been able to set the boy free from the spell.

Lohengrin fell on his knees in prayer to Heaven; and while he prayed a white dove was seen to be hovering above the boat—the dove of the Grail. Lohengrin, rising from his knees with a glad look on his face, loosened the chain from the neck of the swan, who immediately sank into the river; and out of the pool where it sank Lohengrin raised Gottfried, a fair boy in shining silver garments, and led him to the bank. “Behold here the Duke of Brabant, who has come to you for a leader.”

Ortrude fell down with a shriek of mortification, while Lohengrin, stepping into the skiff, bent his head and leaned on his shield; the dove fluttered down, took the chain in its beak, and drew the little boat along the shining river. Gottfried and Elsa, clasped in one another's arms, looked after the departing knight, and as he vanished into the distance joy was for the moment forgotten in the sound of grief and lamentation.

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I

SHE lay in a pavilion on the deck of the ship with her face buried in the cushions of her couch. Her serving woman was standing at the side of the pavilion holding back the curtains and looking out over the ship's side. From high up on the masthead could be heard the strong salt voice of a young sailor singing.

*Westward glances steal :
Eastward speeds the keel,
To Cornwall now
The breezes bear
But where art thou
My maiden fair ?
Are these thy sighs unwilling
With which the sail is filling ?
Blow, O wind, from the sky :
Sigh, my little one, sigh !
Oh Irish maid,
Oh wild and wonderful maid !*

She started up at the sound of the song ; she was blue-eyed, dark-haired and beautiful—the

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Irish princess Isolde. She looked round her in agitation and called to the serving woman: "Where are we, Brangaene?"

Brangaene shaded her eyes and looked out to sea. "I can see blue streaks along the horizon," she said. "The ship is sailing swiftly and smoothly: if the sea is quiet we shall reach the shore before night—the shore of Cornwall."

"Never! never!" cried Isolde wildly; "not to-day nor to-morrow!" And then, as Brangaene dropped the curtain and ran to the side of her mistress, she continued her passionate outburst. "O Mother, where is your sorcery? Who have you taught to rule the sea and storm? Awake for me, brave power! Attend to my will, cowardly winds! Break into tempests and furious raging storm! Destroy the sleep of this dreamy sea! Wake Greed from the depths and let her swallow up this ship with all that lives on it!"

Brangaene saw with the wildest alarm her mistress yielding to this passionate mood; she recalled how Isolde had left her home in Ireland without shedding a single tear or taking any farewell of her friends; she remembered that she had been silent and pale during the voyage, and had taken little sleep or food; and she

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implored her to reveal what it was that was troubling her.

“Air, give me air!” cried Isolde; “My heart is stifling!”

As Brangaene hastily drew aside the great tapestry curtains of the pavilion a beautiful picture was disclosed. Through the opening could be seen the remainder of the ship’s deck as far as the stern, the sea stretching in blue ripples all round. Sailors were grouped about the masts, some lying down, others standing and busying themselves with ropes and tackle. Behind them, on the raised part of the stern, was a company of knights and squires; and a little apart from them, looking thoughtfully out to sea, stood another knight, handsome and distinguished. This was Tristan, who was bringing Isolde back as a bride for his royal master, King Mark of Cornwall.

As this scene was disclosed to her through the open curtains Isolde fixed her eyes on the unconscious Tristan and spoke in a gloomy reverie.

“Destined for me—lost to me—splendid and strong—bold and cowardly—head and heart foredoomed!” And then turning to Brangaene she asked more lightly: “What do you think of my knight, who turned his eyes away from me so shamefacedly?”

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Brangaene was puzzled. "Do you mean Sir Tristan, lady? The knight who is the wonder of every kingdom? Whom everyone praises? Who has no equal in the world?"

Isolde laughed scornfully. "I mean him who runs away from a blow," she said, "because he is bringing the bride he has won like a corpse to his king. Do you think I speak strangely? Then go yourself to him and ask if he dare approach me. Say that I command his presence here."

Brangaene, still bewildered, walked towards the stern where Tristan was standing with his servant Kurvenal beside him. He started as she uttered Isolde's name, and he spoke like a man in a dream.

"Is she tired with the long voyage?" he asked; "it will soon be over; we shall reach the shore before night. I will obey whatever my lady commands."

"She commands you to wait on her."

"Look!" said Tristan, pointing over the ship's side; "where those green shores lie still veiled in blue, the King waits for my lady; soon I shall come to lead her to his presence."

Brangaene repeated her mistress's wish that he should come at once, but Tristan still seemed

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lost in the maze of his thoughts. If he left the helm, he said, he could not be responsible for the safe guiding of the ship to King Mark. But Brangaene repeated Isolde's very words, which were in the form of a command. Before Tristan could answer again, Kurvenal jumped up and interposed.

"Let her tell the Lady Isolde," he cried, "that he who gave the crown of Cornwall to a conquered Irish princess owes no homage to the maiden herself whom he bestows on his uncle, the King." And then, hailing Tristan as a hero, Kurvenal broke into this song in praise of him.

*Sir Morold came for Cornwall's fee,
His sails from Erin hurried :
An island lies in open sea
And there his bones are buried !
His head is hung in Erin's land
As tribute from the Cornish strand :
Tristan our lord we praise,
Thus the tribute he pays !*

At this Brangaene hurried away offended, and drew the curtains of the pavilion again ; but through them Isolde could still hear the loud voices of the sailors who had taken up the refrain of the song and were singing it lustily.

Brangaene told Isolde all that had passed out-

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side the pavilion, including the insolence of Kurvenal.

"Oh! I heard it all!" cried Isolde; "and now that you have seen my shame, listen while I tell you how it came to me. They sing songs to him; but, on my side, I could tell a story about a poor little skiff that came floating in to the Irish shore with a helpless wounded man in it, sick almost to death. Well he knew Isolde's reputation as a healer! And with my salves and ointments I dressed his wound. He called himself Tantris; but I soon recognised him as Tristan, for I found a notch in the hacked edge of his sword into which I fitted the splintered steel that I had found in the head of Morold, when Tristan, who had killed him, sent me the head in cruel irony. Then a voice called on me for revenge; I lifted the sword to kill the helpless Tristan; but he from his bed of sickness turned his gaze, not on the sword, not on my hand, but into my eyes, so that his suffering wrung my heart and I let the sword fall harmlessly. I healed the wound made by Morold and let him go away, so that the sight of him might no more trouble me."

"Oh, heaven!" cried Brangaene. "What can I have been thinking of? The guest I once helped to nurse?"

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"Yes," said Isolde. "You heard them just now singing his praise. That was the very man! He swore a thousand oaths of gratitude and faithfulness to me; but you see how he keeps his faith. He escaped unknown as Tantris, he comes back as Tristan with a great ship to woo me as a bride for the King of Cornwall—for his own kinsman, Mark. No one would have dared to offer Ireland this outrage if Morold had been alive. Oh, shame on me! I ought to have swung the sword when I held it in my hand!"

Brangaene tried to calm her insulted mistress. It seemed as if even the treatment she described could hardly in itself account for her smarting and impassioned words. The faithful servant, calling her sweetest, most precious, golden lady, and other endearing names, tried to comfort and soothe her, saying that it was surely not such a dreadful thing to be the bride of a great king, and one whom a knight like Tristan served so zealously. But Isolde, gazing gloomily before her, could only murmur to herself:

"Unloved by the noblest! Ever to have him near me—oh, how can I endure it?"

"What are you dreaming of, wayward one? Unloved? Where does the man live who could help loving you? And who, if he had once seen

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Isolde, could bear to leave her? And if anyone did win you, and then grew so cold as to be drawn from you by any spell, I would soon bind him close to you again by magic! Do you not know your mother's arts? Do you think that she, who thought of everything, gave me no counsels when she sent me with you to a foreign land?"

Yes, Isolde remembered. Her mother had been famous in Ireland, like herself, for her wonderful draughts and salves; and she had given Isolde a casket containing ointments for wounds, antidotes for poisons, and other subtle compounds, among them a love potion and a quick and deadly poison for the hour of extreme need. At her command Brangaene now brought the casket, and showed her the contents; and Isolde, who had marked the poisonous draught with a sign, took it out and showed it to Brangaene. But Brangaene recoiled in horror; and at that moment the voices of the sailors sounded loudly as they sang at their work and made ready the warps and tackle for lowering the sails. And in the midst of the commotion Kurvenal entered the pavilion.

"The time grows short, ladies," he said. "You must soon make ready to land. Tristan, my lord, commands me to tell the lady Isolde that

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the joy flag is flying, and that our approach has been signalled to King Mark. And Tristan prays his lady that she will prepare to accept his escort on land."

Isolde answered quietly and with great dignity: "Take this message to Sir Tristan. If I must walk beside him into King Mark's presence, polite custom requires that he should first make amends to me for an offence that he has committed. See that you repeat my words to him exactly: I will not prepare myself to go ashore, I will not walk by his side, nor stand in the presence of King Mark, unless he comes to me first and craves my pardon for the wrong he has done me."

Kurvenal went out with the message, and Isolde, turning to Brangaene, passionately embraced her. "Farewell, dear Brangaene! Greet everyone for me, greet my father and mother for me! I will wait for Tristan here. Now go and prepare the draught of peace you know, the one that I showed you."

But Brangaene was horrified when she realized that Isolde meant her to fill the cup with the poisonous draught, and that Tristan was to drink it with her. She threw herself at Isolde's feet, imploring her not to ask her to do such a thing.

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But Isolde was determined, and she gravely repeated Brangaene's own words to her. "Do you not know my mother's arts? Do you not think that she, who thought of everything, gave you no counsel when she sent you with me to a foreign land? Balsam for wounds and woe; antidotes for deadly poisons; and for the deepest of all woe and the direst of all need, the draught of death!" Brangaene was fascinated and paralysed by these sombre words and by the situation in which she found herself. She stepped to the back of the pavilion just as Kurvenal, pulling the curtains aside, announced Sir Tristan. Isolde drew herself up and stood facing the entrance to the pavilion, where Tristan presently entered and stood respectfully.

"I am here at your command, lady," he said.

Isolde began by speaking very quietly. "Surely you knew my command," she said, "although the fear to obey it kept you away from me."

"It was reverence that kept me away," said Tristan.

"It is poor reverence that refuses obedience to my commands."

"It was obedience that held me back."

"Then I owe your lord little thanks if his

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service teaches you disrespect to his chosen bride ! ”

“ In my country,” said Tristan, “ custom demands that he who brings home the bride to her lord must keep apart from her on the journey.”

A tremor of more wistful emotion crept into Isolde's voice, although there was a warning smile of pretended scorn on her lips. “ If Sir Tristan is so careful of customs, surely he might remember another : to make his peace with an enemy if he wishes to win her as a friend ! ”

And they continued to question and fence, Isolde speaking of the blood feud that lay between them on account of the killing of Morold by Tristan ; and she told him how, although she had spared him when he lay sick and wounded, she had silently sworn an oath of vengeance for Morold, who had been her lover, and the noblest hero in Ireland. He had fought for her, and when he fell her honour was wounded too. She had cured Tristan and spared him so that someone, to be chosen by her, might accomplish her revenge.

Tristan offered her his sword. “ Was Morold so dear to you, then ? ” he asked gravely. “ If he was, take this sword again and wield it firmly now.”

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Isolde trembled. "And what would King Mark say if I slew his hero, who has won crowns and lands for him, and is even now bringing him the pledge of truce? Put up your sword, Tristan: I raised it once when you scanned my face to judge if I were a fit bride for King Mark -and I let it fall again. Now let us drink atonement."

Isolde beckoned to Brangaene, who shrank and hesitated; but the gesture was repeated more imperiously, and the unhappy serving-woman set herself to prepare the drink. Again the voices of the sailors were heard on the deck outside.

"Where are we?" asked Tristan, as though he were starting from a dream.

"Near the goal now," answered Isolde; and then, with the first note of appeal in her voice, she said: "Tristan, are we to make peace?"

Tristan spoke darkly in a way that Isolde hardly understood. "The Mother of Silence," he said, "bids me be silent. If I guess what she hides from me, I may also hide what she has not guessed."

The cries of the sailors outside were renewed. At an impatient sign from Isolde, Brangaene gave her the cup filled; and Isolde brought

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it in her hand to Tristan. "You hear the sailors? We are at our journey's end. In a few minutes we shall stand before King Mark. Would it not be well, when you take me before him, that you should be able to say to him: 'Look, my lord, there could not be a gentler woman than this maiden. I slew her lover and sent home his head in mockery to her; she healed the wounds he had given me, and when my life was at her mercy she spared it and gave with it the honour of her country in coming to be the bride of the King of Cornwall. And all debts were effaced between us in a drink of atonement.'"

Out on deck the sailors were heard casting loose the anchor. Tristan, starting wildly, took the cup from Isolde.

"I know the Queen of Ireland well," he cried, "and all her wonderful arts! The balsam she once gave me brought me back to life, and to-day I take a cup that will cure all earthly trouble. Mark well the oath of peace that I swear to her: *Tristan's honour—highest truth; Tristan's anguish—firm defiance! Heart's deceit—warning dreams the only balm for grief! Kindly draught of oblivion, I drink you fearlessly!*"

He put the cup to his lips, but before he had

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emptied it Isolde seized it from him, crying, "Half of it is mine! Traitor, I drink to you!"

She drained the cup and threw it away; and they stood looking at one another, seized first with a shuddering excitement, eyes gazing into eyes as they waited for death. Brangaene, who was in the back of the pavilion, looked on terrified as the expression on the faces of Isolde and Tristan changed from a firm defiance of death to the shuddering dawn of emotion. For Brangaene had changed the draught, and instead of filling the cup with the drink of death, her trembling hands had poured into it the love potion which bound those who drank it to each other everlastingly. And as its volatile essence coursed through their veins, their eyes were opened, the restraint that they had imposed on themselves—Isolde for the sake of vengeance on Morold, and Tristan for the sake of honour to King Mark—was broken down; and their surrender to one another stood confessed in eyes from which endless love looked forth. They turned their gaze from each other, passing their hands over their troubled brows, but their glances were drawn together again as the longing in their breasts grew nearer to expression. Isolde was the first to speak, and her voice uttered one trembling word:

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“Tristan!”

“Isolde!”

She sank on his breast murmuring: “Faithless beloved one!” as his arms closed round her in a passionate embrace; and they stayed there heedless of the shouts that rose from the deck outside where the knights were hailing the approach of King Mark. Brangaene, who had turned her face away at their first confession of love and had been looking out over the bulwarks, turned now, and seeing them locked in one another’s arms ran forward, wringing her hands in despair, blaming herself for the senseless devotion that had wrought unending woe instead of a quick death. Tristan and Isolde started as though they were waking from a dream, and poured inarticulate cries of rapture into one another’s ears; rapture so deep that they did not see the curtains of the pavilion drawn widely apart, the whole ship filled with knights and sailors shouting and hailing towards the shore, which now was seen over the ship’s side where the towering battlements of King Mark’s castle crowned the rocky cliffs. Brangaene summoned Isolde’s attendants from below, rushed between the lovers, and helped the wondering maids to throw round her the royal mantle; but amid all

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the shouting and commotion and wringing of hands and agonised excitement of those about them, Tristan and Isolde remained conscious only of one another; the moment that must part them, when they must meet King Mark, drew near unheeded. When Kurvenal came in and told them that the King awaited them, Tristan asked in bewilderment: "What King?" But Kurvenal's answer was drowned again in the shouts and cheers on the shore.

Isolde roused herself, and looked round bewildered. "What are those cries, Brangaene?" she asked in a troubled voice.

"Isolde! Lady! control yourself, if it is only for to-day!" cried the distracted Brangaene.

"But where am I? Am I alive? . . . What was that draught you gave me?"

"It was the love draught," cried Brangaene desperately; and Isolde turned to Tristan, who had been listening to Brangaene's words. "Must I live, then?" she cried, and sank fainting on his breast.

"Look to her!" cried Brangaene to the women. And as the commotion increased on the deck of the ship there rose a mighty shout of greeting to King Mark and to Cornwall.

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II

The echoing sounds grew fainter and fainter.

“Do you hear them still, Brangaene? Surely the sound is dying away!”

“They are still near us, lady; the sound comes quite clearly yet.”

Isolde listened. “You are anxious and afraid,” she said; “the rustle of leaves in the laughing wind is deceiving you.”

“Your heart’s desire is deceiving you, lady, and makes you hear what you will. I can still hear the sound of the horns.”

Isolde leant forward with her hand upraised listening to the sounds of the night. She had come out of her chamber door into the bright moonlit garden of the castle, where through the gateway a magic green glade could be seen lying asleep in the luminous summer night. A torch burned in a bracket beside the garden gate. Isolde was dressed in a long white clinging garment, and her eyes were bright with eagerness and joy. She listened impatiently, Brangaene anxiously; and for a moment they stood there motionless, straining their ears after the murmur of the hunting horns that had died away in the distance.

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"No horns have such a sweet tone as that," said Isolde at last; "the soft murmur of the fountain ripples towards us on the silence, and how could I hear that if horns were blowing still? The very fountain is laughing to me in the silent night, and ah! someone watches for me; would you keep him away?"

"Someone watches for you—yes," said Brangaene. And she spoke of the treachery that might lurk in the still garden at midnight. She reminded the impatient Isolde how, when Tristan had falteringly presented her to King Mark on the ship, and everyone else had attributed their confusion to the fatigue of the journey, Brangaene had noticed one man, Melot, who had looked cunningly at the lovers as if he had read their secret. And though Melot pretended to be Tristan's truest friend, Brangaene did not trust him, and believed that he had planned the midnight hunting party with a treacherous design. But Isolde would not share her suspicions, and thought rather that Melot had planned the expedition out of friendship to Tristan.

"Oh, make no more delay—put out the torch, Brangaene! Quench its warning light, and let my lover come to me!"

Brangaene begged her to leave the torch as a

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warning to Tristan not to come, and bewailed her own impetuous act that had brought about this tragic result. But Isolde laughed at her.

"It was not your act, foolish one," she said, "but the work of the Love goddess; and however she may turn it, however she may end it, whatever she may have in store for me, wherever she may lead me, I am hers and utterly submissive to her!" Seizing the torch, Isolde threw it to the ground and put it out. Brangaene turned away in consternation towards a staircase that led to the battlements of the castle, where at least she could keep watch for her wilful mistress.

Once more the silence of the night fell, but in Isolde's breast there was a tumult of love and longing. Listening eagerly, she looked down the avenue, trying to pierce the luminous gloom of night; then she took a long white veil that was round her shoulders and began to wave it, at first shyly, but soon with more and more passionate impatience. And suddenly her face was radiantly lighted; she threw down the veil, quick footsteps sounded in the garden; Tristan rushed in, and they were locked fast in one another's arms.

They could do nothing but clasp one another and pour foolish questions into each other's ears,

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trying to assure themselves that they were indeed together, that they belonged to one another in truth, and that the undreamt-of, overwhelming delight had indeed come true. They spoke of the long hours that kept them apart, of the time of waiting—Tristan out in the darkness, Isolde in the light. “That envious light!” cried Tristan; “how long it seemed to burn! Even when the sun sank, and the day died away, it seemed to light up that warning sign out of spite to me, to keep me away from my beloved!”

“But it was your beloved’s hand that put out the light,” Isolde answered tenderly; and then they spoke of the friendly darkness and the hateful light; of the day that had all along been their enemy, the night that had been their friend; and, as lovers do, they made a symbol of the day and the night, seeing in the day a sign of everything that was hateful and impossible—the glitter of rank, the bright sun of earthly fame, the rules and opinions of the world—all the lying deceits of things as they appear. The night was a sign of hidden and true things, of the love between them which could never fade, but which the world would never sanction; and as day stood for life, and night for death, so they felt, in the trembling and almost agonising rapture of

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their union, that life and day held no place for them, and that only in night and death could their love come to its perfect flower. "Ah," cried Tristan, "if our love could only be consecrated to the night, the envious day, even though his cunning might part us, could never again cheat us with his lies! Eyes hallowed by the night could mock at his boastful splendours and never be blinded by the glare of day. The falsehoods of day are like dusty sunbeams, woven in vain for him who knows the deep secrets of night and death. Only one longing remains amid those vain dreams of delight—the longing for the silent night where the laughing rapture of love lies for ever hidden!"

The shadows shifted and stirred as the sea-scented breeze wandered through the garden; the short summer darkness was moving across the sky, and the distant glades of the woodland began to be filled with a faint blue vapour where formerly had brooded the blackness of night. The fountain dripped and trickled, but the lovers, who had sunk down on a soft bank of flowers, heeded nothing except their own sighs and raptures. They felt the infinity of love that can never fully realise itself in life, and they prayed that the night would sink down upon

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them, and longed that the night of death might enfold them in its arms and set them free from the world. The sun of their lives lay hidden deep in their hearts; they had nothing left to pray for but an eternity of oblivion into which their souls might sink together.

Once from the battlements Brangaene's voice uttered a long warning cry, reminding them that the night was passing. Isolde opened her eyes and raised herself a little at the sound. "Listen, beloved," she said.

"Ah! let me die!" murmured Tristan; but she whispered to him of the poor envious watcher on the tower.

"If only we might never wake again!" was all his answer; and when she said: "But the day will come and awaken Tristan!" he said: "Then let day fade into death!" And they lay murmuring to each other again of love and death, and of some union from which there might be no awakening.

Behind them the colours of the sky were changing, and the dove-coloured space behind the trees was beginning to burn with the first embers of dawn; and once more Brangaene's voice sounded in warning from the tower. This time it was Tristan who bent smilingly over

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Isolde, saying "Shall I listen?" and Isolde who, looking up at him in ecstasy, murmured : "Let me die here!" -he who asked "Must day awaken Tristan?" and she who passionately answered, "Let day fade into death!" And the thought of a perfect union in death filled them with such glowing ardour that they forgot the reddening sky and the dangers of the dawn, until suddenly Brangæne uttered a piercing cry, and Kurvenal rushed in with his sword drawn calling "Tristan! save yourself!"

Close behind him came King Mark, accompanied by Melot and the members of the hunting party, and all of them paused horrified at the sight of the lovers in each other's arms. Brangæne had hurried down from the battlements and ran to support her mistress, who was sinking with averted face on the flower-strewn bank, while Tristan stood before her with his cloak held out to shield her from the eyes of the onlookers.

For a moment the whole company remained as though frozen in the attitude of discovery, while the first birds began to chirp in the garden, and day stole up from the woodland glade. Then Tristan passed his hand over his eyes like a man waking from a dream, and Melot, pointing him out, asked Mark if his accusations had not been

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true, reminding the King that he had offered his life as a pledge of Tristan's guilt. "See how I have saved my monarch's fame from reproach!" he said.

But King Mark had no praise for him. He stood there, ennobled by his grief, incapable of any petty or undignified act or thought; and he told Melot that he could give small thanks to one who had struck such a blow at his heart. "If Tristan betrayed me," he said, "how could I have dreamt that it would be Melot who would guard me from his stroke of treachery!" And then, turning to Tristan, he spoke in sad and trembling tones.

"Tristan! This to me! Where shall faithfulness be found if Tristan proves unfaithful? Where can I look for honour, loyalty, truth, if their guardian has forgotten them? Why did you win honour and power and fame for Mark if his shame was to pay the price for them? Did his thanks seem too mean, when he gave you for a heritage the kingdom you had won? Do you remember how, widowed and childless, your King loved you so that he would not marry again, even though all his people urged him to bring them a queen? How he resisted all entreaties, until you, Tristan, threatened to leave his court and

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country if he did not let you go and seek a bride for him?—I let it be so. This wonderful fair bride you won for me—this bride, whom my desire never dared to approach, and before whose calm soul passion sank abashed—who could see or know her and not feel hallowed? Why did you plant this cruel wound in my heart, and so fill me with suspicion that I had to stoop to playing the spy? It is a hell that no heaven can make me forget, a shame that no penance can wash away; and who can ever tell me the dreadful, mysterious cause of it all?”

Tristan raised his eyes with grave sympathy to King Mark. “I can never tell you, sire,” he said. “You can never know.” And then he turned to Isolde, who looked up longingly at him. “Isolde, will you follow Tristan where he must go now, to a land where the sun never shines, that land of night out of which my mother brought me? I offer you now that wonderful realm of darkness; so let Isolde tell Tristan if she will follow him there with a loving heart?”

She answered without faltering: “When Tristan first wooed Isolde falsely, she followed him to a foreign land; now you are taking me to your own country, and why should I shun the realm

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that encompasses the whole world? Let Tristan lead the way to his house and home, and let Isolde follow him with a loving heart!"

At these words he bent down slowly, and reverently kissed her on the forehead. Melot started angrily forward, crying out that the outrage could not be endured. Tristan drew his sword and turned round upon him. Holding his weapon on high and looking Melot straight in the eyes, he accused him of his treachery, and told the King how Melot's eyes had been blinded by Isolde's beauty, and his heart made traitor by jealousy. Then he turned to attack him; but as Melot thrust forward with his sword Tristan let his own weapon fall to the ground and sank wounded into Kurvenal's arms. Isolde threw herself on his breast; and it was King Mark's hand that held Melot back from his fallen foe.

III

In the neglected garden of his castle on the coast of Brittany Tristan lay asleep. His couch had been brought out into the open air and set under the shadow of a great lime tree, and Kurvenal was sitting beside him, watching his

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pale face and listening to his breathing. The garden was tangled and wild, the walls and battlements ruinous and decayed; great creeping trees of ivy were twined about them, and an air of desolation hung over the whole place. An opening in the garden walls showed a pale stretch of sea, blank and empty to the horizon.

There was a shepherd sitting higher up on the battlements, where he could look out to sea, playing a long dreary strain on his pipe. In its dropping notes, its long pauses and strange minor cadences it expressed eloquently the brooding melancholy and desolation that lay on the scene. The shepherd was stationed on the cliff by Kurvenal to keep a look out for the ship that had been sent to bring Isolde to Tristan's side; and he had been told to go on playing the melancholy strain so long as the sea was empty, but that if he saw the ship he was to break into a merry tune.

Tristan presently awoke, hardly knowing where he was; wondering if he was in Cornwall; and when Kurvenal told him that he was in his own castle of Kareol, he asked wonderingly how he had come there.

"How did you come here? Not on horseback, you may be sure," answered Kurvenal cheerfully.

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"A ship brought you, but I carried you to the ship on my broad shoulders. Now you are safe at home in your own country; these are your own pastures, and the sun of home shines on them. Here you shall be cured happily of your wound."

But Tristan would not believe that there was any cure for him, and he fell into a kind of delirious dream in which he lived over again all that had happened to him since he had fought with Morold and gone to Isolde to be tended. Kurvenal told him how he had thought of sending for Isolde—surely she who healed Morold's blow, could heal Melot's too! The plaintive tune from the shepherd's pipe still floated sadly about the precincts, until Tristan began to think it would never change. Kurvenal assured him that the ship would come that day, and Tristan's fever burnt into a torment as he imagined it, with sails filled by a favouring breeze, and the flags flying at the mast, bringing Isolde to him.

Suddenly the strain changed, and the shepherd was heard piping a merry tune. Kurvenal ran to the battlements and looked out to sea, and hurried back with the joyful news that there was a ship in sight. As he told of its progress Tristan followed it with his mind's eye, tortured by

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anxiety lest it should get foul of the rocks that lay at the entrance to the little harbour, and dreadfully anxious lest there might be another Melot acting as steersman and willing to be a traitor to him again. Kurvenal watched the ship until it was close in, until he had seen the company disembarking, and then he ran out to meet them.

But the strain was too much for Tristan. In a mad delirium of joy he raised himself from his couch and tore the bandage from his wound, laughing when he saw the blood flowing; and as Isolde rushed into the courtyard, he was only able to stagger into her arms, shouting deliriously of the light and the torch, and crying, "The torch is gone out!" She held him in her arms, but he sank slowly to the ground, and with her name on his lips he died.

Just then the shepherd ran in to announce the arrival of another ship containing King Mark with Melot and his retinue. Kurvenal, who feared a second treacherous plot, called his own men about him and got them hastily to barricade the gate of the courtyard. Melot's voice was soon heard on the other side of the wall, and with it Brangacne's calling to Isolde and begging Kurvenal to let her in. But Kurvenal would

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listen to no one ; he was convinced of treachery, and as Melot appeared at the door, he attacked him and struck him dead. The whole party was quickly involved in a struggle, in which Kurvenal was mortally wounded ; and the fight was only brought to an end by the appearance of King Mark, who drove Kurvenal and his party through the door. This was all a mad delusion, and it was for Tristan that he had come.

Kurvenal, pointing out the dead body, staggered and sank down beside it ; he called on the name of his master and fell back dead. Brangaene was begging Isolde to listen to the happy news her servant had brought. "I have atoned for my blind folly," said Brangaene. "When you had gone, King Mark sought me, and when he heard my secret of the changed potions, he followed me to sea in order to give you up and join you to Tristan !"

King Mark, looking on in dismay at the scene of death and sorrow, confirmed what Brangaene had told. "But alas !" he said sorrowfully, "what malice there is in adversity ! Even he who brings peace in his hand cannot stand against its fury. I have only enriched the harvest of death, and crowned the work of misfortune."

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But Isolde was not listening. A change had come over her. Her look of terror and misery had been succeeded by a strange ethereal exaltation. Death was coming to her too, but in no violent or cruel form. As she fixed her gaze on Tristan, her face was lighted up by a tender excitement; she thought she saw his eyes opening, smiles stealing over his face, and felt his heart beating and his lips parting softly as he breathed again. Into her eyes there came a rapt far-away expression. The thundering music of death was beating in her ears; but as her earthly consciousness ebbed she heard only delicious strains that filled her soul with soft echoes, floating about her, flowing in upon her, ringing in ethereal tones, surging like a sea of sound. Now in a soft rushing breeze, now in a cloud of sweetness, they gathered about her; she was inhaling them, listening, drinking, diving into them, covering herself in the waves that rose from the sea of sound, becoming one with all the beating tides of the world's breath—ah! to sink there, and to drown, in a heaven of bliss and oblivion.

The MASTERSINGERS OF NUREMBERG

I

*As by thee the Saviour stood
Meek in the baptismal flood,
Vowed Him to the saving strife,
Gave the words of light and life,
By thy blessed font may we
Worthier of His Passion be :
Christ's Preceder !
Be our leader
Till at last we stand
There by Jordan strand !*

THE afternoon service held in Saint Katherine's church at Nuremberg on the vigil of the feast of Saint John came to an end with the singing of this choral, and its slow and massive phrases rolled out on the tones of organ and voices, line by line. The congregation were seated while they sang ; and in the last pew, quite at the back of the church, there were sitting a young girl and her older companion, both dressed in the rich sober attire

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characteristic of the families of well-to-do craftsmen. They were Eva, the beautiful daughter of Veit Pogner, the goldsmith, and Magdalena, her nurse and attendant. Leaning against a pillar behind the pew was a handsome young knight, Sir Walter von Stolzing, his gaze fixed passionately on Eva ; and sometimes when her eyes stole away from her book in his direction (for she was not behaving so reverently as she should have been) he uttered as eloquent and impassioned an appeal to her as it was possible to make in a place where he could neither speak nor kiss his hand. At any rate there could be no question as to his meaning, or that the charming Eva had captured his heart.

The hymn over and the service ended, the congregation gradually dispersed while the organist improvised a long cadence on the choralc. Eva and Magdalena were the last to leave, and as they turned to go Walter stepped forward and spoke softly but earnestly to Eva, begging her to speak one word with him. Eva was almost too confused to speak, but she made excuses to send Magdalena back to the pew, now for her handkerchief and now for her scarf, and she turned shy melting eyes on the knight, who implored her to tell him whether his fate was

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to be happiness or woe. As Eva was still too confused to speak, Sir Walter, when Magdalena returned and asked him if he wished to go and visit Pogner, could only mutter sorrowfully: "I wish I had never entered his house!"

"Good gracious!" said Magdalena, "what do you mean? When you came to Nuremberg did you not receive a friendly welcome from him? And don't the bread and board, food and drink that you received at his hands deserve any thanks?"

Eva reproved her and told her that that was not what Walter had meant. He could not rest until he knew whether Eva was betrothed or not, but she was too confused to reply herself, and asked Magdalena to tell him; and the nurse then told him that, although Eva was indeed betrothed, no one knew to whom, for Pogner, her father, had determined to offer her hand as a prize to whoever should win the coming singing competition which was to be held on the morrow by the Mastersingers of Nuremberg. No one could tell who would be the victor, but the fortunate one would have Eva's hand in marriage unless she found him displeasing to her.

While this conversation was going on, David, a young apprentice, came in from the sacristy

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and began to draw together some dark curtains which screened off the nave, and otherwise make preparations for some gathering. He cast longing eyes at Magdalena, with whom he evidently had some understanding, for she found his presence a little distracting; and in the confusion Eva forgot her shyness and told Walter that to-morrow she would choose him or no one—a confession that, while it delighted him, greatly shocked Magdalena. While Walter was walking up and down in extreme agitation, Eva begged Magdalena for her help, asking her mischievously if Sir Walter was not like David.

“Ah, David! David!” sighed Magdalena, and at the sound of his name he joined the little group and explained that he was preparing the aisle for a meeting of the Mastersingers—a trial meeting for those seeking admission to the ranks of the Masters.

Magdalena saw that it was a chance for Walter, and she advised him to get David to tell him the necessary rules of the trial, and to enter himself in the coming competition. Walter was greatly cheered by this prospect, and he took a tender farewell of Eva, swearing that he would certainly become a Mastersinger and win her from them all.

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They hurried away, and Walter sank thoughtfully into the singer's chair, while a number of apprentices came in and began to carry about benches and seats in preparation for the trial. While they were doing this David, amid many interruptions, told Walter the rules of the trial—how they must first learn the proper tones and melodies in order to produce the voice properly, afterwards learning all about “stave” and “stanza” and “aftersong”; and he gave him a terrifying list of tones that he would have to know, such as the “long,” the “short,” the “crimson,” the “green” tones; the “notepaper,” the “writing-ink,” the “rosemary,” and “cinnamon” modes, and a dozen others with names equally absurd. And then he must learn to be a poet and compose words to his tunes; in short, David gave the knight such a formidable list of the accomplishments to be acquired that he was in despair.

By the time David had finished imparting this information the apprentices had arranged the seats in the aisle, and had also brought out a small platform surrounded by black curtains. Inside this they placed a chair and desk, and brought a slate with a piece of chalk fastened to it. This was for the Marker, who, hidden behind

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the curtains, was to listen to the singing and keep a record of faults and mistakes. At last the Masters themselves began to arrive—grave dignified-looking citizens of Nuremburg, all engaged in one or other of the crafts for which the town was famous in the sixteenth century. The principal ones among them were Veit Pogner the goldsmith, Kunst Vogelgesang the furrier, and Sixtus Beckmesser the town clerk ; but the chief of them all was Hans Sachs, the poet-cobbler, beloved by the whole town for his kindness, loftiness of character, and mellow common sense. As the Mastersingers came into the church they were talking together in groups ; Beckmesser, a stout and ridiculous-looking little man full of self-importance, was talking to Pogner and begging him to grant him Eva's hand in marriage. Pogner promised to do everything he could for him ; but the town clerk was obviously suffering from a lack of confidence, and eyed with doubt and fear every possible rival. He conceived a particular jealousy for Walter when he came up to Pogner and told him that he wished to enrol himself in the ranks of the Mastersingers.

When the roll had been called Pogner addressed the assembled Masters. He reminded them that

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to-morrow was the midsummer feast of St. John's Day, when the whole town would repair to the meadows to celebrate the day with songs and dances and happiness. They would turn the church choir into a singing club and follow the crowds where the banners would be waving in the meadows. There would be different gifts and prizes for different competitions ; and Pogner himself, as he was a rich man, had been wondering what prize he could give that would be worthy of the occasion.

"Now listen to what I have decided," he said. "It has always given me pain, when I have been travelling through Germany, to hear the burghers condemned as mean and selfish. It is the same in high life and in low life ; I am tired of hearing that the only things we burghers care about are treasure and gold. I think they have hardly realised that it is we alone who have promoted art ; and to show what value we place on it, I mean to give to the winner of to-morrow's competition, whoever he may be, the hand of Eva, my child and heiress of all my money and goods !"

The only condition was that Eva should have a voice in her disposal ; although she might not choose a husband elsewhere than from among

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the Mastersingers, she would be free to refuse the winner if he displeased her.

This speech created great excitement. Some approved, some criticised; among others, Beckmesser, who thought he was pretty sure to win the competition, but not very likely to secure Eva's approval. Hans Sachs proposed to let the decision be made by the public voice, but Pogner explained that that would make the matter too complicated; and in the meantime Beckmesser's ire was directed against Sachs, who, when he heard that Beckmesser meant to try and outsing him, declared that they were both much too old to marry Eva.

When the excitement had calmed down a little, Walter was presented to the Mastersingers, who prepared to hear him sing. He was asked to tell them who it was that had taught him the art, and his answer and the specimen of his singing were given in an improvised song.

*Beside the hearth in winter-time
When town and tower were white with rime—
How Spring of old with smiles was gay
And soon should wake once more to May,
I read in many an ancient lay
My sire had copied duly :
Sir Walter von der Vogelweid',
He was my master truly.*

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"A good master," said Sachs approvingly, as the first verse was finished.

"Yes," put in Beckmesser. "But he has been dead a long time, so how can he have learnt our proper rules?"

Then Fritz Kothner, another of the Master-singers, asked Walter in what singing school he had learnt. He sang on :

*Then when the frost had left the plain
And summertime was come again,
What once in winter, night by night,
That ancient book had taught aright
Resounded in the woodland bright
Till every bush was ringing :
The birds, beloved of Vogelweid',
They gave me tunes for singing.*

"Dear me!" said Beckmesser. "The finches and tits taught you the tunes! No doubt, no doubt!" And he wagged his head indignantly.

A discussion immediately arose among the masters as to the young knight's pretensions; some, like Beckmesser, thought them absurd; but others, among them Pogner and Sachs, thought that they ought to examine him seriously and give him a chance. So Walter was told to sing something which he could submit to the Marker's examination; and he decided to try to

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express in verse and song the memories of his childhood. Beckmesser, who was the Marker, was presently shut up in the box with the black curtains, having taken with him the slate and the piece of chalk so that all the beginner's mistakes might be entered.

While Walter was thinking over what he would sing, Kothner had a large placard of the rules brought, and read to him the list of all the things which he must not do ; and he was finally led to the singer's stool and placed in front of the Masters. He thought of Eva as he took his seat, and murmuring "I am doing this for you, beloved!" he made ready to invent and sing some verses which would celebrate Nature, Spring, and Love. "Now begin," cried Beckmesser from the box.

Walter collected his thoughts and then began. During the first verse there were a great many unpleasant groans and scratchings of the chalk from the Marker's box ; but Walter, although a little disconcerted, recovered himself and began his second verse. No sooner had he got to the end of it, however, than Beckmesser, thrusting the curtains of the box aside, displayed the slate so thickly covered with chalk marks that everyone laughed and began to argue vehemently over

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the merit of the singer. Walter's songs conformed to none of their old crabbed rules, and for that reason some of them, headed by Beckmesser, wished him to be disqualified there and then. But Pogner and Sachs defended his song as being really poetical, even if it was irregular in form, and claimed that he should have the right to be heard. In the midst of the arguing and tumult, Walter, who had grown bitter and impatient and felt hopeless of ever satisfying so pedantic an assembly, started up and began to sing a third verse in which he roundly abused his persecutors, calling them croaking ravens who could never understand the beauty of the art that had been taught him. When he had finished he angrily left the building, while the Mastersingers and the apprentices, who had by this time returned, joined in a tumult of excited argument.

They were still talking and wrangling as they dispersed. The last to depart was Sachs who, left alone for a moment in the darkening aisle of the church, looked thoughtfully on Walter's empty seat, and then turned away with a gesture of humorous despair.

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II

*Midsummer day! Midsummer day!
Flowers and ribbons as bright as you may!
The garland of flowers in silken twine,
Oh how I wish that the prize may be mine!*

On the evening of the same day David was putting up the shutters of Hans Sachs's shop, and the narrow street that wound between the tall irregular houses of Nuremberg was echoing with the voices of other apprentices who were singing as they busied themselves with the shutters of other shops. Sachs's shop stood at one corner of the street, almost covered by the spreading branches of an elder tree; and at the opposite corner, shaded by a magnificent linden tree, stood the much more imposing dwelling of Veit Pagner.

Magdalena came out of Pagner's house with a basket on her arm, and going up to David said: "Look, here is something nice to eat for my good boy! But tell me first what happened to Sir Walter. Did you advise him well? Did he succeed?"

"Alas! Lena," answered David, "he did badly and sang badly."

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Lena was so shocked and disappointed at this news that she snatched the basket away from David and went back into the house wringing her hands and crying: "Take your hands off the basket! You shall have nothing!"

The other apprentices, seeing that there was something wrong, came and danced round David, jeering at him, and singing:

*Midsummer day! Midsummer day!
Everyone courting as hard as he may!
The master courts, the prentice courts,
According as their bent is;
A maiden gay for the master grey,
A spinster for the prentice!
O hey! O hey! Midsummer day!*

They were beginning to fight when Sachs, who had come down the street, separated them and sent David in to tidy up the shop and light the lamp.

All the while the sunset was fading and the warm summer evening was closing in. Pogner and Eva, who had been out for a walk, came slowly down the street, hand in hand; Pogner had been thinking a good deal about the coming contest and the fate of his daughter; he felt that he would like to talk to Sachs about it, and he looked through the shutters to see if he were

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working there. But he changed his mind, fearing that Sachs might be offended with him for wishing to give away his daughter as a prize; and drawing Eva to a stone bench under the linden tree he asked her how it was that she had nothing to say on the great subject. She replied demurely: "An obedient child only speaks when she is bidden." She was, in fact, impatient for news of Walter, and tried to get her father to go indoors, saying that it was too cold to sit there after the heat of the day; and at last, when Magdalena came to the door of the house and told them that supper was ready, she persuaded her father to enter. Then she heard from Magdalena the news of Walter's failure, and she decided to try and find out from Hans Sachs something more about his chances. In the meantime she followed Magdalena into her own house.

The shoemaker's bench and stool had been placed by the open door, and Sachs sat down intending to finish some work; but the sweet scent of the elder flowers, giving off their perfume in the gathering dusk, beguiled his thoughts so that he fell into a meditation. Poetical ideas thronged into his brain, but he rebuked himself for a plain-minded man who had much better stick to his cobbling than play with poetry. And yet,

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what a wonderful thing poetry was ! How haunting was the memory of the song he had heard that morning, which, although it fitted to no rules, yet was new and fresh, rising spontaneously from the soul of an artist. The singer sang because he could not help it ; and although the Masters might disapprove of him, Sachs knew that the singer was a better artist than any of them.

While he was meditating thus, Eva came quietly and timidly across the street and greeted her old friend, for whom she had a long-standing affection. Sachs explained that he was making some shoes for Beckmesser. "Put plenty of pitch on them, then," said Eva, "so that he may stick fast and let me go free !" She wished to lead their talk to the subject of the competition, and with this opening she asked Sachs who else was likely to compete. In a very pretty and provoking way she asked him if he had no ambitions for himself. Once he had had both a wife and children, but they were dead, while she had grown tall and fair. "I had an idea," she said mischievously, "that you might take me both for wife and child."

But Sachs laughed a genial denial, keeping up the play with tenderness and humour, although

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deep in his heart there was a wistful longing, which he would never let her see, for the love and companionship of one who had grown so dear to him. When Eva found that he had decided not to compete himself, and that he did not particularly favour Beckmesser, she spoke openly of Walter's examination. She displayed such an eager and absorbed interest in the fate of the young knight that Sachs could hardly help feeling a pang of sadness, and there was a suggestion of mischief in his words when he described Walter's utter failure to impress himself on the Masters. "He who is a born Master," said Sachs, "stands a poor chance among other Masters."

But Eva was annoyed, and as Magdalena called across the street to her, she rose, saying, that if Walter stood no chance among the envious Masters, there was a warm place for him in other hearts. "God save anyone who smells of pitch," she added wickedly; "he had better burn it and keep his soul warm!"

But Sachs had seen through her transparent anger, and as he looked pensively after her he decided in his generous heart to do all he could to bring about what she had evidently set her heart on. He closed the door of his workshop, leaving only a crack of light visible, while

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Magdalena gave Eva a good scolding for being so late. She had news, moreover. She had seen Beckmesser that evening, and he had said he was coming to serenade Eva that night and give her a rehearsal of the song with which he proposed to win her. But Eva was only interested in Walter, asking if anyone had seen him, and she made Magdalena promise to stand at the window in her place and receive Beckmesser's serenade. She herself wanted to go and look for Walter, but as Magdalena was in the very act of drawing her into the house she broke away with a glad cry, for Walter was coming down the street. She ran towards him, hailing him as her own true love, her poet, hero, and only friend.

But Walter, clasping her in his arms, said sorrowfully that he was only her friend, and neither hero nor poet, for the Masters would have none of him.

"Oh these Masters!" he exclaimed. "These awful Masters! with their sticking-plaster rules and restrictions! They make me furious when I think of the way they have served me. Still, I am master in my own house, and if I am to set you free, as I swore to do, you must fly with me and get out of this place." And his voice rose

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in passionate anger against the insolence and pedantry that made him fight for his lady's hand against a set of obsolete rules instead of against a drawn sword.

At that moment the loud note of the night-watchman's cow-horn was heard, and it came so suddenly on the quiet of the night that Walter was startled and clapped his hand to the hilt of his sword. But Eva took him soothingly by the hand, saying, "Be quiet, dear one; it is only the watchman. Hide quickly under the linden tree. Sec, he is coming this way!"

At that moment Magdalena came to the door, calling again softly to Eva; and while Walter concealed himself under the tree she went into the house and the door was shut. The old man with his horn and lantern came slowly down the street and passed round the corner, singing in a quavering voice his ancient stave:

*Hear my singing, all good people,
It has struck ten from the steeple:
See to your fire and candle light
That none may come to harm to-night.
Praise the Lord of Heaven!*

The lovers' conversation had been overheard by Sachs, who now opened his door a little wider and shaded the lamp, determined to keep an eye

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*Oh Eve! it's you must bear the blame
For giving all the trouble :
Since little feet are still the same
An angel has to cobble !
There were no stones at first
Before the earth was curst :
Your youthful folly makes me stitch
The leathern soles I ply with pitch,
And 'tis along of Adam's fall
That I must handle thread and awl.
Were I not quite
An angel bright
The devil would make your shoes to-night !*

He went on with his work while he sang, emphasising some of the notes with a blow of his hammer. Whenever Beckmesser began to sing Sachs began to hammer, and the grotesque Beckmesser, trying to drown the hammering, made a noise so appalling that it resembled the quacking of a duck rather than the singing of a minstrel. In any case, the song was ridiculous enough, and full of prosy phrases and misplaced accents.

*I see the dawning daylight
That confers great pleasure,
My heart is filled with a light
Thankful courage be sure :
Then I think not on dying
But on applying
For a sweet young girl's hand.*

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*Thus of the whole caléndar
Fairèst I this day call
Because of this maid tender :
I tell you one and all
Her réspected good father
Persuaded hath her,
And her wedding hath planned.
Come, all you who
My passion knew,
There the lady stands fair of hue,
On whom is builded my hope true :
And that is why the sky is blue
As now I understand.*

Sachs pretended to be acting as Marker ; and Beckmesser's song was rendered ten times more ridiculous by the hammering accompaniment of the shoemaker. The louder Beckmesser sang the louder Sachs hammered, and presently the tumult began to arouse the neighbours, who one after another put their nightcapped heads out of their windows and asked what was the matter. Magdalena, who had come to the window and was making melting gestures to Beckmesser in the hope that he would go away, was observed by David from his window on the other side ; and he, believing that Beckmesser was serenading his lady-love, ran out and began to belabour him with a cudgel. Apprentices came running from all directions, always delighted to be in any

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tumult that was going on; and as the din increased, the neighbours came out into the street, dressed in all sorts of strange garments, and carrying candles and lanterns. Everyone got hold of a different explanation of the commotion, and opportunity was taken to pay off a number of old scores; some of the neighbours thought there was a fire, and poured down water on the heads of the crowd. A dozen minor fights were soon in progress, under cover of which Eva and Walter began to think of making good their escape. But Sachs, protectingly on the watch, after ordering David back into the shop with a kick, and sending off the much-bruised Beckmesser, came out into the middle of the street and grasped Walter's arm. He pushed Eva up the steps of her house into the arms of her father who had just come out, and, still holding Walter in his friendly grasp, dragged him into his own house with him.

The sudden loud blast of a horn, striking panic into the crowd, served to scatter them in every direction back into their houses. Doors and windows were closed, lights disappeared, the noises died away, and the street returned to its former peaceful and deserted state. The night watchman, rubbing his eyes as if some

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slight sound had aroused him from slumber, came out from behind a building, staring about him in bewilderment and shaking his head. And presently his tremulous tones broke forth :

*Hear my singing, all good people,
It has struck eleven from the sleuple :
From ghost and goblin guard you well,
And malice of the fiend from hell.
Praise the Lord of Heaven !*

And as he disappeared up the alley, the hollow note of his horn echoing again, the moon sailed out from behind a cloud, shining serenely down on the housetops and throwing their shadows black and sharp on the quiet street.

III

In the bright morning sunshine of the next day Hans Sachs was sitting by the window in his workshop in profound meditation, with a great book open on his knee. The room was bright with flowers, and the glare of the sunshine in the street promised a fine day for the festival. David came tripping into the room with one of Magdalena's well-filled baskets on his arm ;

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Sachs did not notice him for a little while, and David was in doubt whether to hide the basket or to investigate its contents. He was very much afraid of Sachs's anger on account of the doings of the night before, and when the cobbler closed his great book with a bang, David jumped with apprehension.

But Sachs, who had been deep in his book, spoke as though still in a dream, asking how the room came to be decorated with flowers and ribbons? David, delighted to find him speaking so mildly, reminded him that it was St. John's Day. Sachs remembered, and asked him if he had learned his verses for the day; and David stood up to repeat them. He was so confused that he made a false start, beginning to sing them to the tune of Beckmesser's serenade. But after the one false start he made no mistakes, and sang with great success a verse celebrating the Feast of St. John.

*Saint John by Jordan took his stand
Baptizing every nation,
A good wife from the German land
Came hastening for salvation :
Her little son he sought the same,
They named him and baptized him :
But when to Nürnberg home he came
She scarcely recognised him.*

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*He found among his native clans
Howe'er by Jordan custom scours
Johannes as his name,
By the Pegnitz he was Hans!*

David, reminded by the song of his master's name, gave Sachs good wishes for his name-day, adding to them the offer of his basket of flowers and dainties; he hoped that Sachs would win in the competition, and that Eva would come and adorn the house as mistress. The kind poet replied with reserved dignity, keeping locked in his own breast whatever sad thoughts of renunciation may have lurked there.

When David had gone Sachs sat down again in his chair and took up the thread of his meditation. He was thinking what a mad thing human nature was, and how difficult it was to find any rational cause for the manifestations of human will and passion. What a strange idea people often had of pleasure -thinking they were happy when they were torturing themselves! He saw an example of this strangeness in the events of the last night, when he had seen his own Nuremberg, sleeping peacefully in the midst of Germany, suddenly aroused to rage and riot, and a whole flood of angry temper let loose because a shoemaker tried to prevent the follies of youthful

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passion. What had set it all going? Was it merely some glowworm who could not find his mate, the smell of the elder flowers, or the excited atmosphere of Midsummer eve? At any rate, Midsummer day had now come, and Sachs felt that he must try to turn all this madness to some good purpose.

At this moment Walter came in from a side door and was warmly greeted by Sachs. He had enjoyed a refreshing sleep after the excitements of the night, and he had also dreamed a most beautiful dream, which Sachs suggested he should make the theme of his competition song; for Sachs insisted that Walter should not be daunted by his failure of yesterday but should still enter for the competition. He told him he must have patience with the Masters who, although they might be mistaken, were sincere; he himself believed in Walter, and advised him at once to compose a master song. "It is all very well to do without rules in life's spring-time," said Sachs, "but when life has toned down the pulses and time has blunted one's enthusiasms, art and science make a very good substitute for youthful delusions. The rules were made by men who had lived and suffered; and that is why I, who feel spring fast fading

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out of my heart, urge you not to despise altogether the rules that we have framed. Now tell me your morning dream; I will copy out your words and show you how to turn your invention into a master song.

So Walter, recalling the memories of his dream which were still vivid in his mind, and improvising a melody for them, began to sing, describing the magic beauties of a garden in the first blush of dawn, in which a fair maiden appeared to him holding in her hand the fruit of the tree of life. As he went on, Sachs, who was taking down the words, showed him how to divide the song into verses according to the rules. Then Walter sang a second verse, describing the garden at twilight, when, as he lay there full of longing, he beheld the tree of Fame crowned with stars.

Sachs was delighted with the song, praising it warmly, and encouraging the ardent young poet. Then, as the time had now come to go and dress for the contest, the two men hurried away, full of confidence in the successful issue of the trial.

They had hardly gone out when Beckmesser, limping and rubbing his sore places, came into the room looking for Sachs. He shook his fist at Pogner's house, which he could see through the

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open window ; and as he limped round to the table he caught sight of the paper on which Walter's song was written. As it was in Sachs's writing Beckmesser assumed that it had been composed by the cobbler and that he intended to compete with him. He had just time to hide the paper when Sachs came back ; and Beckmesser taxed him with treachery to him on the previous night in trying to spoil his suit with Eva. Sachs denied that he had any feeling of rivalry, and Beckmesser, thinking to confuse him, produced the paper with the song in his own handwriting. But to his surprise Sachs made him a present of it and assured him that he would never proclaim himself as the author.

This was a godsend to the town clerk, whose song of the night before had not been a great success ; and he immediately displayed an ungainly goodwill towards Sachs, which was no less ridiculous than his anger had been.

Beckmesser departed in high glee, and no sooner had he gone than Eva, who looked charming in a beautiful white dress, appeared at the shop door. She pretended that her shoes were pinching her, although the real reason for her coming was quite different. Sachs, who saw through her little deception, willingly entered

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into it and went seriously into the question of the faulty shoe, taking no notice even when Eva, seeing Walter return to the shop, uttered a cry of delight. The good cobbler turned his back while the two lovers gazed at each other in an ecstasy of emotion; and as he bent over his bench he remarked how pleasant it would be if someone would sing to him while he worked, adding that he had heard a charming song only a few minutes before.

Walter took this hint and sang a third verse of his prize song, in which he described how Fame and Love were united in adorning the maiden of his vision, who gave herself to him and realised his highest dream of love.

Eva, who listened in delight, suddenly understood who it was that they had to thank for this success, and she turned to the friendly cobbler and threw her arms round his neck, while Walter came up and clasped his hand. Sachs, who was deeply moved, tried to cover his emotion by making jokes about his shoemaking; then he pretended that he had to go and look for David. But Eva would not let him go. She wanted to pour out her gratitude to him and her devotion.

“Dearest master,” she said, “you may scold

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me as much as you like ; but I was in the right when I fell in love with you ; and if this other master had not come to rob me of my will, I would have chosen you for a husband ! ”

But wise Sachs shook his head. “ Dear child,” he said, “ I know the sad story of Tristan and Isolde, and I am wise enough to avoid the fate of poor King Mark ; so it is just as well that the right man came in time to save me. Ah ! here come Magdalena and David. Now that the witnesses and sponsors are ready, we may as well go on with the christening.”

David and Magdalena had come in their holiday dress, and they, with Eva and Walter, looked at Sachs with surprise.

“ Yes,” continued Sachs, “ a child has been born here and we must give it a name ; that is always done by the Masters when a master song is produced. Sir Walter is the father of this new-born poem ; Eva and I will be the sponsors, and David and Lena shall be made witnesses. But wait a moment ; an apprentice cannot be a witness, so I must make David a journeyman. Kneel down, you rogue ! ”

David knelt down and Sachs, giving him a friendly box on the ear, pronounced him fully qualified as a journeyman.

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Eva and Walter joined their voices in a rapturous expression of their bliss, while Sachs and Magdalena and David gradually joined in until the cobbler's workshop echoed with happy and joyful sounds. Then Eva and Magdalena hurried off to join Pogner, while Walter and Sachs set out together for the contest. David, when he had put up the shutters, hurried after them.

In the meadows below Nuremberg the whole population was making holiday. There were booths gaily decorated with flags and streamers, in which was unlimited refreshment for the thirsty merry-makers. There was a brightly painted stand with a band of drummers and trumpeters mounted on it; there were boats coming and going on the winding stream of the Pegnitz; and whenever they drew up beside the green banks they landed a fresh cargo of happy citizens. A platform, decorated with the banners of the corporation, had been erected for the Mastersingers, and all the apprentices in their holiday attire were singing and dancing about waving wands and streamers, and adding mirthful sound and movement to the brilliant scene. Presently the Guilds began to arrive—the shoe-

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makers first, singing their song in honour of St. Crispin.

*Crispin bold,
His praise be told!
He was a godly man,
Did all a cobbler can.
He'd always work to help the poor
With boots to keep them dry;
If no one gave him leather, sure
He'd steal it on the sly.
The cobbler's conscience needn't gall him,
For boots are boots whale'er befall him,
So when the tanner has tanned his best,
Stick, stick, stick
Your needles in to do the rest.*

The tailors followed, also singing the song of their guild.

*When Nuremberg beleaguered lay
And hunger tortured it,
The town would not be here to-day
But for a tailor's wit
Who had both brains and grit.
He sewed himself in the skin of a goat
And went for a walk beside the moat;
So finely did he trip it,
So stoutly hop and skip it,
The enemy they scuttled down—
"The devil's come to take the town!"
So lustily Meck-meck-meck he cried.
Meck! Meck! Meck!
And to think it was only a snip inside!*

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The bakers came next, singing to the gloomiest of tunes :

*Hunger dread! Hunger dread!
That's the grimmest sorrow.
If bakers did not bring the bread
You'd all be dead to-morrow.
Bake! Bake! Bake!
Working every day
Your hunger to allay.*

At last a commotion near the landing place, and another fanfare on the trumpets, signalled the arrival of the Mastersingers. A group of girls came first, scattering flowers in their path, and then the good burghers followed, Kothner first, carrying the banner, and Pogner following holding Eva by the hand. Magdalena walked behind; evidently she was a popular person, and she had smiles and greetings for everyone—especially the apprentices. The banner was set up, the Mastersingers took their places, and the heralds called for silence.

Hans Sachs then rose to address the company; but at the sight of him a great shout went up from the whole crowd; hats and handkerchiefs were waved. "Hans Sachs!" they shouted. "See, Master Sachs! Strike up, everybody!"

And then solemnly, with full hearts and hearty voices, they greeted him in a noble song of his

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own composition, in which his soul had poured out its poetic salutation to Luther and the Reformation—a song which everyone in Nuremberg knew by heart.

*Awake! Awake! The day is near,
And from the leafy hedge I hear
The love-enchanted nightingale
Whose song resounds through hill and dale:
The night to westward sinks away,
Out of the east appears the day,
The darkling veil of clouds is drawn
And bright with scarlet burns the dawn.*

Sachs was completely overcome by this magnificent outburst of welcome; and in a voice that trembled at first, but afterwards grew firm, he spoke to the people of his pride in the love and esteem that they showed for him.

Then he stated the conditions of the competition, dwelling specially on the loftiness of its object and the beauty of the poet's art, and announced the rich prize offered by Pogner. And turning to Beckmesser, he asked him how he was feeling.

"Oh this song!" answered Beckmesser, shaking his head; "I shall not come well out of it, although heaven knows I have studied it enough!"

But there was no help for it; the town clerk

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was made to climb the grassy knoll upon which the singers were placed, and tuning his lute he began to sing a dreadful parody of the words of Walter's song to his own pedantic strains. As the onlookers began to laugh he grew more and more nervous ; forgot the words ; tried to look at the paper under cover of his long sleeves ; got into a worse and worse muddle ; and finally, amid roars of laughter from the whole populace, broke down completely. There was a great deal of comment and mockery from the crowd, but Beckmesser's pomposity held him to his task and he struggled on, making a worse hash than ever of his singing, transposing the words, mixing up meanings, until even his strident croaks were drowned in the shouts of laughter that rose from every side. He rushed down from the rostrum and, throwing the paper at Sachs's feet, furiously denounced him as a traitor and a rascal. And then amid the laughter and jeers of the crowd he rushed away out of sight.

But Sachs quietly picked up the paper and explained that neither he nor Beckmesser was the author of it, but that in its true form it was the composition of Sir Walter, whom he called upon to come forward and sing it. The Mastersingers thought this a very clever stratagem on

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the part of Sachs, but they were in a good-natured mood, and decided for once to let Sir Walter have a hearing. Walter came forward, splendidly dressed, and with a modest and dignified demeanour took his place on the grassy mound. As soon as silence had been secured he began his song; in due accordance with the rules of the Mastersingers it was in three verses; and it was an even purer and more perfect version of the song that he had sung that morning in Sachs's workshop.

*Bright in the sunshine at dawning of day,
When fragrance rare
Was in the air,
With flowers attended
Passing splendid,
An open garden lay.
And there beneath a wondrous tree,
Where golden fruits were gleaming,
Was all that lover's eyes could see
In hope's divinest dreaming
Fulfilment to receive,—
That fairest queen
Of all her Eden, Eve!*

The Masters and people looked at one another in pleased surprise. "That is quite a different thing!" they said. "Who would have thought that the song could sound so different!"

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Walter sang on :—

*Dim in the gloaming descended the night :
By pathways lone
I clambered on
To where a fountain
On the mountain
Laughed in my eager sight.
And there beneath a laurel-tree,
Where stars were shining clearly,
In poet-dreams I seemed to see
A lady greet me dearly
Sprinkling the fountain's dew,—
That noblest queen
Of Helicon, the Muse!*

As he sang, and as the wonderful melody climbed and soared, and drooped and soared again until it reached a climax of rapture and delight, the emotion of the listeners could hardly be restrained. “Now for the third verse,” commanded Sachs, “and then the finish !”

*Praised be the day
To which I woke from poet-dreams !
The Eden that my sleep had known
Transfigured now in heavenly gleams
Before me lay :
Bright in my path the fountain shone,
And there she waited,
The maiden fated,
The dearest face on the earth,
My Muse by grace divine,*

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*Rich in all beauty's worth,—
And there I made her mine:
With sunshine warm upon me
Through night of song I won me
Eden and Helicon!*

At this glorious outburst of song, the people did not wait for any formal decision, but hailed Sir Walter with one accord as the winner of the contest. Eva, who had been listening in an ecstasy of pride and joy, came down from the platform and placed the laurel wreath on her lover's head, and at the same time Sachs came forward with the golden chain which was the symbol of admission to the rank of Master. But Walter drew back; he felt that he did not owe his success to the pedantic rules of any corporation, and he made a movement as though to refuse the chain, crying, "A Master never! I can be happy without being a Master!"

But Sachs turned to him gravely, and grasping him by the hand remonstrated with him wisely and seriously. "Do not disparage the Masters," he said, "nor despise their art. They have offered you their highest honour, and you have won it by something better than your ancestry or your prowess with the spear or sword—by the art of the poet. How can you despise an art

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that has brought you such a prize? And remember that art, if she is not now honoured quite so much as she used to be, when she was the delight of princes and nobles, has still remained German and true in spite of troubled times. Bad times will come again; and when the German people fall into foolish foreign ways, and foreign thoughts begin to flood into Germany, what is good and true in German art will not endure unless the Masters keep it in honour. Therefore I say to you, honour your German Masters and you will preserve the right spirit! And then, even though the Holy Roman Empire should go to pieces, our holy German art will still remain to us."

Walter was moved and touched by Sachs's lofty conception, and as he indicated his submission, Eva took the crown from his head and placed it on Sachs's, while Sachs put the chain over Walter's neck. And as the lovers leaned on his arms, looking up at him in love and admiration, and as Pogner and the other Masters turned to him with gestures of homage, the whole populace sent up a mighty shout of praise to Hans Sachs, the darling of Nuremberg.

**The TRILOGY
of the
NIEBELUNG'S RING**

PRELUDE:

The RHINE GOLD

THE Rhine Gold is not a drama at all in any recognised sense of the word, nor can its effect be suggested in the form of a narrative. It is a great hypnotic preparation for the mythological drama of the Niebelung's Ring, which takes place in a region so remote from ordinary human affairs and emotions that between it and the everyday life of the world some shadowy curtain of sound and colour has to be interposed. He who takes his place at the performance of this Prelude ought to resign his own ideas and will as completely as the patient who submits himself to the anæsthetist; and as the fumes of the anæsthetic gradually creep into the chambers of the brain, occupying them, transforming them, cutting off communication between them and the conscious will, so the deep music of the Prelude floats into the senses and gradually overpowers them.

In the hypnotic trance of imagination into which this music throws us four scenes are

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revealed—none of them of this earth or world as it is known to mortals, and each, as it succeeds the other, melting out of it almost imperceptibly. Once in the submarine twilight of a river bed, once in a world of giants and magic castles, once in the depths of the earth, and once amid clouds and the rainbow roads of the sky the fantastic scenery of this Prelude takes shape; and when the trance is over and we return to consciousness and vision of normal things, we have been placed in possession of the fundamental principles from which the trilogy of the Niebelung's Ring is evolved.

I

Out of silence rose a note of sound, a bourdon deep and continuous, generating a wave of tone that hummed and vibrated like the pulse of the world itself, and gradually enlarged its waves until it became a vast harmonic chord still continuously extending in power and resonance. One orchestral voice after another joined the fundamental chorus, adding grave harmonics to the diapason, and gradually establishing a balanced undulation of tone like the flowing movement of water. Still the tone did not

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change; the ear, thrilled to expectancy, communicated its anxiety to the other senses: and as the booming noise increased the eye began to look for an explanation of what the ear had heard. And as the note rose out of silence, so out of darkness rose the first sensation of vision—dim, green twilight instead of blackness; vague movement in place of stillness; light, a little more light, more and more tone, until the great curving arpeggios of sound began to break at the top into smaller waves and figures like ripples on the surface of a river. Sound, light, colour, movement, gradually combined and revealed to us the dim green depths of the Rhine, sown with rocks and the roots of water plants, the stream of the tide running restlessly past like a train of clouds. It was twilight towards the surface, and night in the darker depths below.

* * * * *

Into this world of water swam three Rhine maidens, singing a song of liquid syllables:

*Weia! Waga!
Well of the water
Waver and wander,
Win us from waking!
Wallala weiala weia!*

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They were guarding the Rhine Gold that lay harmlessly in these green depths ; and they swam and dived, circling and floating and hiding behind the rocks, singing their happy nonsense the while.

Presently Alberic, an ugly powerful dwarf, attracted by the beauty of the maidens, clambered down and lurked in the shadow of a rock watching them. He, who lived in the underground world of Niebelheim, had never seen anything so lovely as the forms of these maidens that darted and dived about in the flowing water ; and he began to woo them, calling to them in his gruff voice, and trying in his ungainly way to clamber over the rocks in pursuit of them. The maidens, who were at first frightened of him, grew bolder when they found that his movements were so slow ; and they began to mock him, calling to him to come up to them, and then darting away just as he was reaching out his arm. When they saw that they were safe from him they teased him with seductive laughing invitations and rippling mockery of his ungainly movements, until he grew mad with longing ; and then the maidens, growing tired of their sport, called him ugly and horrible, and explained to him that they could never think of loving anyone so loathsome as

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he. But Flosshilda, one of the three, carried her mocking cajolery farther than any of them and actually allowed Alberic to caress her, and even clasped him in her arms. "Oh, what rapture to see your staring glances and handle your stubbly beard!" she laughed. "I wish your stringy locks and bristling hair might float for ever round Flosshilda!"

"Are you laughing at me?" asked Alberic. And Flosshilda, suddenly freeing herself from him and darting away, cried: "There is an end of your love-making!" And she joined the others in a peal of mocking laughter.

Alberic, infuriated, renewed his pursuit of the three nymphs, clambering from rock to rock, staggering, falling, until at last he sank back exhausted, shaking his fist at them. At that moment the sunbeams, striking through the water, shone on a point of rock that rose in the middle of the river; the Rhine Gold was there, and as the rays caught it the whole wavering world of water was kindled into a flood of golden light, while the three Rhine maidens, darting to the rock and swimming joyously about it, sang a happy laughing song of worship to the beautiful gold. Alberic was fascinated by the light, and he listened while the nymphs sang

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to one another of the magic powers of the Rhine Gold : how anyone who possessed it might shape out of it a magic ring that would give him the command of the universe. But no one had ever achieved this power, because no one had ever fulfilled the condition imposed with it—that the possessor of the Ring must first forswear love in every form.

But Alberic, infuriated by mortified desire and longing, thought that he might as well forswear love since it had apparently forsworn him, and he clambered up to the summit of the rock and seized the gold. “See! I take it!” he cried, “And I forswear love for ever!” He tore the shining mass from the rock, and as he sank down with it the light faded from the river and darkness fell over the scene. Black waves of water flowed everywhere ; in the distance could be heard the terrified cry of the maidens, and from far below Alberic’s mocking laughter.

II

The waves grew less dense, more misty ; they seemed to be changing into clouds ; and in their turn the clouds cleared gradually away and re-

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vealed a flowery meadow where, in the light of the sunrise, Wotan, the god of the Universe, and Fricka his wife lay asleep.

As the sun's rays touched them god and goddess awoke and saw before them the pinnacles of a great castle shining in the morning light—Valhalla, which Wotan had commanded the two giants, Fafner and Fasolt, to build for him during the night. Wotan and Fricka stood looking at it with delight; Wotan, because it was the realisation of one of his most splendid visions, and Fricka, because she hoped that with so brilliant a home Wotan would not be tempted to wander from her into the world. She told him of this hope, but he smilingly replied that he could never promise to forswear the world altogether, and that he could not entirely forgo change and adventure. And when she called him base, and careless of a woman's worth, he reminded her that he had lost one of his eyes in winning her; in fact, that he held women in rather higher esteem than she cared about.

At that moment Freia, Fricka's sister, ran towards them in terror crying out that Fasolt the giant was pursuing her. Wotan had promised to give Freia to the giants as a reward for their labours in building Valhalla, and he had tried to

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think of some way in which he could get out of his bargain. He had sent Loki, the god of Argument and Lies, all over the world to find something that the giants would accept instead of Freia, but so far nothing had been found for which they would give up woman and beauty.

While Freia and Fricka and Wotan were talking together the two giants, armed with great clubs, came marching up to them and demanded their payment. They would not be persuaded to take anything as a substitute for Freia, and were about to seize and carry her off when Donner and Froh, her brothers, the gods of Thunder and Sunshine, came running to her aid, and close at their heels came Loki, who had returned from his travels. He said that he had done everything that he could to get Wotan out of his bargain; he had examined Valhalla and tried all the walls and foundations, but it had been honestly built; he had been all over the world, but had found nothing which would replace in the minds of men the charm of womanhood. Wherever there was life, in flood and earth and air, he had tried to find something that men prized more, but he had only been laughed at. The only person who esteemed anything more than love was the miserable dwarf Alberic, about whom Loki had

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heard from the Rhine maidens. He told Wotan how Alberic had robbed the Rhine of its treasures, and how the Rhine maidens were looking to Wotan to restore it. Wotan, interested in the Rhine Gold, asked Loki to tell him more about it, and he reflected what a powerful and useful thing it would be to possess for himself; but when he learnt the condition attached to it—that it could only belong to someone who had forsworn love—he turned away discouraged. Then Loki suggested to him that there might be another way of getting it. “What a thief has stolen, you can steal from the thief. Could anything be easier?” Wotan considered it.

Fafner and Fasolt had been listening very attentively to this conversation and consulting together; and they now came forward and told Wotan that there was one thing that they would accept for Freia, and that was Alberic's treasure of gold in Niebelheim. Wotan asked them impatiently how he could give them what he did not yet possess himself? So the giants, seizing Freia, said that they would take her away and hold her as a pledge until evening. If the gold were not given to them before night the gods would never see Freia again. As they dragged her away, and her cries echoed down

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the valley, a mist came over the scene, in which the gods shrank and withered as though age had overtaken them. For Freia tended the golden apples on which the gods fed ; no one else could cultivate them, and it was her power that kept alive the pulse of everlasting youth.

The age and blight that overtook the gods when she departed convinced Wotan that she must be redeemed from the giants at any cost ; and summoning Loki, he told him to show the way to the home of the Niebelungs where Alberic ruled. Loki led him to a cleft in the rock through which sulphurous smoke was rising, and as Wotan followed, the cloud thickened until it enveloped the whole scene.

III

A rhythmic clinking and hammering rose on the air as Wotan and Loki sank through the black clouds into the cavern that led to the centre of the earth. As the smoke cleared away rocky walls rose round them ; ruddy beams of light played on the walls, and the clinking and hammering grew louder. At last they reached the cavern which was the home of the

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Nibelungs, a race of dwarfs who never saw the light, but were compelled to toil for ever at the mercy of Alberic, serving his greedy ambition by mining and working at the treasures of the Niebelheim.

As Wotan and Loki entered Alberic was in the act of quarrelling with his brother Mimi, who had been making a helmet of gold and, realising that it had some magic property, wished to keep it for himself. It was the magic Tarnhelm, which enabled the wearer to assume whatever shape he pleased. Alberic showed Mimi how it worked by putting it on his own head and vanishing, a column of smoke appearing in his place. When Mimi asked wonderingly where he had gone to, Alberic, still invisible, began to belabour him with a whip; and then hurried off, pursuing and punishing the other wretched slaves of the Niebelheim, whose howls and cries rose from the back of the cavern.

Wotan and Loki, entering by a cleft at one side, found Mimi cowering down in pain; and when they asked him what was the matter, he told them how Alberic had lately acquired the Rhine Gold and made it into a ring, under the magic spell of which he had forced the Nibelungs to toil like slaves night and day, mining and

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melting gold and making it into toys and ornaments.

While they were talking the sounds of blows and shrieks were heard again, and Alberic, who had resumed his own shape, now returned brandishing a whip and chasing before him a long procession of Niebelungs who were bent almost double under the load of gold and gems which they carried, and which Alberic caused them to pile up in a heap. Then, plying his whip, he drove Mimi into the midst of the crowd of dwarfs; as he stretched out his Ring they all shrank into crevices and disappeared to the shaft of the mine again.

“And what may you want here?” said Alberic angrily to Wotan and Loki.

They replied that they had come to see the wonderful things that Alberic was reported to possess; and Alberic, flattered in spite of himself, boastfully showed them his store of riches, saying, “That is only to-day’s; there will be far more to-morrow.” And he boasted of the power which the Ring would give him, and how he intended to be ruler over both gods and men. He was so arrogant and insulting that Wotan was on the point of striking him with his spear when Loki interposed, and warned him to try

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cunning. "You have done very well," said he to Alberic; "but suppose someone came to steal the Ring from you, what would you do?"

Alberic replied that he had a helmet which would make him invisible; and that if anyone came to steal the Ring from him he could either hide or assume any shape he liked. Loki pretended not to believe it; and Alberic, to convince him, put on the Tarnhelm, crying out, "Giant serpent, uncoil yourself!" He disappeared and in his place a monstrous serpent lay writhing and opening its jaws at Wotan and Loki. They pretended to be very much frightened, and when Alberic reappeared they congratulated him on his cleverness. But Loki remarked that it might be more useful to become something very small, if it should be necessary to get out of danger; and Alberic, falling into the trap, changed himself into a toad which the gods saw creeping about on the rocks. Wotan put his foot on its head; Loki seized the Tarnhelm, and Alberic, who then appeared in his own person writhing under Wotan's foot, cried out, "A thousand curses! I am caught!"

They quickly bound him with a rope and then, taking no notice of his struggles and imprecations, dragged him after them towards the shaft

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by which they had descended. The sulphur fumes rose again, and smoke darkened round them until even the rocky walls disappeared.

IV

When the smoke rolled away they found themselves once more in the open space near Valhalla; but the sun was not shining on it, and the pale mist that had gathered when Freia had been taken away still hung over the meadows. Wotan and Loki dragged Alberic up through the cleft, and bade him command his crowd of dwarfs to bring up from the depths the treasure he had amassed. At a touch of the Ring strange little Niebelungs came crawling up through the crevice carrying with them a glittering burden of treasure, and when they had made it into a great pile they shrinkingly departed again. But Wotan and Loki were not satisfied yet; they made Alberic give them both the Ring and the Tarnhelm, and only then did they loosen his bonds and let him slink away. Before he went, however, the furious anger which his misfortune had aroused in him was expressed in a terrible curse. "*As I won the Ring first by a curse,*" he said, "*so let the*

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Ring be cursed! Death shall be the portion of whoever owns it; he shall never know happiness or mirth, but shall be consumed by care and anxiety, while he who does not possess it shall be torn with envy! He who is master of the Ring is doomed to become its slave, until the day when it is restored to the Niebelung again!" And with this curse Alberic vanished through a crevice in the rock.

Froh, Donner, and Fricka now came up and anxiously asked Wotan if he had been successful, and Donner announced that he could see Fasolt and Fafner coming back with Freia to receive their reward. And as Freia drew near a delicious breeze seemed to stir about the gods, a wonderful sense of lightness came over them, the mist lifted from about them, the evening sun shone out, and their youth and strength were restored.

The giants then demanded their price; and they fixed their staves in the ground in front of Freia, insisting that enough gold must be piled there to hide her completely from their sight before they would give her up. So Loki and Froh heaped up the treasure between the staves, Fafner resisting any attempt to build it lightly, and roughly packing it tight with his own heavy hand. When all the ornaments had been piled

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there a glint of Freia's hair could still be seen, and the Tarnhelm had to be added to the pile in order to hide it. Even then Fasolt found a crack through which Freia's bright eye gleamed like a star; and while that was visible he refused to let her go. There was nothing left to fill the chink with but the Ring, and that Wotan absolutely refused to give. Fasolt angrily pulled Freia from behind the pile, saying that the bargain was off; and while the other gods were begging Wotan to add the Ring, and he was still refusing, Erda, the ancient spirit of the Earth, rose slowly out of the ground in a hollow of the rocks near him.

She was a noble and mysterious figure, seen there in the bluish light that surrounded her; heavy black hair fell round her and covered her body, and she spoke in slow and solemn tones to Wotan. Erda had all knowledge, all memory and all foresight; she was the mother of the three Norns who sat for ever spinning the threads of Fate; she already knew what must come of the Ring and its curse. "Stop, Wotan!" said she. "Fly from the accursed Ring! There is endless ruin for you in the possession of it!"

Wotan, amazed, asked who it was that was

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speaking. "What everything was, I know. What everything will in time become, I also know; Erda the everlasting one summons your will. Hear me, hear me! Everything that exists will come to an end; Night will fall on the gods. I warn them to give up the Ring!" And she sank back into the earth again, where Wotan would have tried to follow her if the other gods had not restrained him.

For a moment he remained absorbed in thought, and then, coming to a firm decision, he turned to Freia and cried, "Come back to us, Freia! You are set free! We can be young again!" He added the Ring to the heap of treasure, and the giants released the goddess, who joyfully ran to the others and embraced them.

Fafner and Fasolt then began to take up the gold in a great sack, but they had not been long at this task before the curse of the Ring fell upon them and they began to quarrel over the division of the spoil. In the midst of their quarrelling Fafner knocked Fasolt down with his staff and beat him to death, while the gods looked on horrified. He carried the sack of treasure away with him; and being only a poor stupid giant, and neither a god nor a hero, he could think of

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nothing better to do with it than hide it in a cavern and, using the magic of the Tarnhelm to change himself into a dragon, spend the rest of his life there guarding it.

When Fafner had gone away Fricka came up to Wotan. "Why do you wait, Wotan?" she asked, pointing to Valhalla. "Does the castle not invite us?"

A mist still hung over the mountain of clouds on which the castle stood ; and Donner, to dispel it, climbed to an overhanging rock and began to swing his hammer and to summon the dews and clouds to a thunder-storm. Gradually, as his cries echoed among the rocks, the mists gathered completely about him. At a stroke of his hammer lightning flashed from the clouds and a heavy clap of thunder reverberated in the sky. He called to his brother Froh, who had also disappeared among the clouds ; and presently the thunder ceased, clouds and mists rolled back, and a wonderful rainbow bridge lay stretched across the sky between the place where the gods stood and the castle of Valhalla, which was now once more brightly shining in the evening sun.

Wotan, contemplating his new home, turned to Fricka and said, "Come, wife, and dwell with me in Valhalla !" He led her on to the rainbow

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bridge, and Froh, Donner, and Freia followed them. But Loki, who was only half a god, and had cunning enough to see that the race of god-head was coming to an end, paused a moment before following them. He felt ashamed to be involved in the fate of a race that was foredoomed, and wondered whether it might not be better for him to go forth into the world and wage war against them. But he decided to go on, and had just set his foot on the bridge when the sad song of the Rhine maidens was heard pealing far below in the valley. They were crying out for the Rhine Gold which they had lost, and which lit the river depths for them with laughing golden light. It had been their plaything, their shining joy ; now that they had lost it they were desolate, and they called to the gods whom they saw walking on the rainbow to give it back to them. "Give us back our gold and our glory," they cried.

Wotan paused in the act of setting his foot on the bridge, and turned round. "What are those cries that I hear?" he asked.

"It is only the Rhine maidens mourning their lost gold," replied Loki ; and he shouted to them that they must rejoice no more in the Rhine Gold, but in the new splendour of the gods.

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The gods laughed aloud and set forth slowly to cross the shining glories of the bridge to Valhalla ; but from below the desolate song of the Rhine maidens still echoed.

*Rhine gold ! Rhine gold !
Shining gold !
O gleamed it but still
In the stream, the glittering spoil !
Trusty and true
In the deep is our treasure :
False and feigned
All that ye favour above !*

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I

ON a stormy spring evening the door of a rough forest hut was thrown violently open, and a man, weary and spent with fatigue, staggered in and looked wildly about him. No one seemed to be in the hut, but there was a fire of logs burning on the hearth, and he sank down there exhausted on a bearskin rug. The hut in which he had thus found shelter was very roughly built round the trunk of a mighty ash tree; there were a few shields and weapons, a rough table and a few benches, a cupboard near the hearth; and a door with a rough mat hung over it, leading into another chamber. The thunder growled and rumbled away outside; the storm was passing; the wind sank and waned, moaning fitfully in the wide fireplace.

Presently the door of the inner chamber opened and a woman, young and fair, came in and looked wonderingly at the resting stranger. As she came near him he raised his head, calling wildly for a draught of water. She ran and

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brought him some in a drinking horn, watching him while he raised himself up and drank it, fastening his eyes on her with growing interest the while. "Who is it who has quenched my thirst?" he asked. "This is the house of Hunding, and I am his wife," said the girl; "he will come in presently and greet you himself."

Then the stranger told her how he had been wounded in a fight; his spear had broken, and he had had to fly from his pursuers. As they talked, they looked at one another with more and more interest and emotion until the stranger, who had been restored by the rest and refreshment of the house, roused himself, and said that he must wait no longer, as he was one who brought misfortune wherever he went. But the girl begged him to stay a little longer: "You can hardly bring misfortune here," she said, "for misfortune dwells in the house!" And the wanderer, strangely compelled by her words and glances, agreed to wait Hunding's return. For a time they sat in silence by the hearth, listening to the wailing storm outside.

Presently the trampling of a horse was heard, and Hunding, a dark, formidable-looking man, came in and gravely greeted the chance guest, whose presence his wife made haste to explain.

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He bade her prepare supper, and while she was doing so he looked thoughtfully from his wife to the guest, as though he were comparing their faces. "How like he is to the woman," he murmured to himself. "He has the same snake-like look in his eyes." And then, as they took their places at table, Hunding, who never removed his earnest regard either from his wife or guest, asked the stranger to tell his story.

Fixing his eyes on the mistress of the house, the guest began to speak earnestly. They must call him neither Peaceful nor Happy, but rather Woeful, he said, for his life had known nothing but unhappiness. He told them that his father was "The Wolf"* of the race of the Volsungs, who had brought up him and his twin sister in a little house in the forest. The Wolf was strong and warlike, and had many enemies; and one day the boy had come home from an expedition in the forest and found the house burnt down, his mother murdered, and no sign of his sister anywhere. They knew that this must be the work of a neighbouring hostile tribe; and the boy and his father had fled from their ruined home and led a wandering life in the forest,

* Wotan had wandered from Valhalla as "The Wolf," and an earthly woman had borne him twin children Siegmund and Sieglinde.

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living like wolves and fighting their way through the world. But after one of their fights the son strayed from his father and had never seen him since; when he had gone to search for him he had only found an empty wolf's skin. Ever after that day, said the stranger, he had been homeless and friendless and pursued by misfortune, unlucky in battle, embroiling himself when he sought peace, suffering pain where he looked for pleasure. No wonder they had called him Woeful.

"The Norn who wove your destiny could hardly have loved you much," said Hunding darkly; "nor does the enemy, to whom you now come as a guest, welcome you." But his wife interposed. "Only a coward would be afraid of a lonely and weaponless man! Tell us, guest, in what struggle you lost your weapon?" The stranger then told how he had gone to the rescue of a maiden whose brothers were trying to force her to marry a man whom she hated; he had fallen on her brothers, but they had defeated him, and killed the maiden before his eyes.

Hunding, it appeared, had been a friend of the people whom the stranger had attacked; and therefore, according to custom, he was bound to consider the Volsung his enemy, and

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to fight and slay him if he could. He promised him hospitality for the night, however, bidding him at the same time prepare for combat on the morrow. Then, taking his spear, he ordered his wife to prepare his evening drink of mead and take it to their chamber. She hesitated and delayed a moment, looking long and anxiously on the stranger; but Hunding drove her away with a commanding gesture, and she departed, taking the drinking horn and the light with her. Hunding took his weapons down from the tree, and warned the stranger to beware of them to-morrow, when he should surely die; and with these sinister words he followed his wife.

It had now become quite dark in the hut but for the fitful glow that rose and fell in the fire. The stranger, sitting by the hearth, began to meditate on the beauty of the woman whom he had seen, and on the strange emotion that stirred him in her presence. Then he thought of Hunding, and realised his own weaponless condition and his helplessness to serve the unhappy wife. He remembered that his father The Wolf had once promised to provide him with a sword in his hour of extreme need. "Where is that sword now?" he asked himself bitterly.

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The falling embers of the fire sent up a momentary glow, and the flame was caught by a piece of bright metal that gleamed from the ash tree. But the stranger, although he saw the gleam, did not see what had caused it, and as the fire sank down again he fell into a deep meditation on the beauty of the gentle friend who had succoured him.

The fire sank, darkness enveloped the room. Very softly the inner door was opened and Hunding's wife, dressed all in white, came timidly in. She had put a drug into the drink of Hunding, who was now in a deep sleep; and she had come to warn the stranger to save his life by flight. "I can give you a good weapon, too," she said, "if only you can win it; but only a hero can secure it. Listen while I tell you about it. When Hunding was celebrating his wedding feast here, though everyone else was merry, I was miserable, for he had married me by force and against my will. Suddenly among the revellers I saw an old man who wore a low-brimmed hat that hid one of his eyes. He scowled at the others, but he smiled on me as he swung his sword in his hand. Then he struck it up to the hilt into the ash tree, saying that it was a prize for whoever could pull it out. Everyone tried,

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but the strongest warriors among them could not move it. Oh ! surely it was left there for a hero who would be a friend to me in my need ! Whatever I had bewailed would be made up to me if I could only find this hero and hold him in my arms ! ”

The stranger, whose face had radiantly lighted while she was speaking, clasped her rapturously in his arms. “That friend clasps you now, wonderful mistress ! and he claims both weapon and wife ! ” He poured out his newly aroused love in a flood of words, and she, yielding to his ardour, looked joyfully into his eyes.

Suddenly they started apart as the door at the back of the hut swung wide open. “Ah, who was that ? ” cried the girl in alarm. “Who came in ? ” There was silence for a moment ; through the wide-open door they could see the green depths of the forest flooded with the glory of a spring night ; for the storm had passed, the clouds had left the sky, and the moon shone tenderly down on the forest and flooded into the room with its white radiance. Siegmund clasped her tenderly in his arms. “No one passed,” he said, “but someone came in. See, Spring stands smiling in the room ! Winter storms soften into May, and Spring laughs sweetly,

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weaving wonders wherever he passes. Spring calls to Love, the Love that was buried in our hearts and has now leaped forth to light ! ”

“ You are the Spring ! ” cried Sieglinde ; “ ah, the Spring that I have longed for in frosty winter ! ” And they spoke rapturously to one another of the love that had wakened in them, and of the dumb longing for one another that had made their hearts ache until they met. As they looked into one another’s eyes their memories were awakened ; they realised that they were children of the same father, and destined to produce a hero of pure Volsung blood. She told him that he must no longer be called Woeful. “ Give me a name yourself, then,” cried her lover. “ Ah, it was for you that the Volsung struck the sword into the tree,” she answered. “ The Volsung was your father, so I shall name you as I love you—‘ Siegmund, Victorious One ! ’ ”

“ Siegmund ! ” he cried. “ I am both Siegmund and Victorious ! See how I take the sword which my father promised for my hour of need ! I give it a name—‘ Nothung.’ Forth from thy sheath, Nothung ! ” With a mighty effort he plucked the sword out of the tree stem and waved it triumphantly in the air, raising his voice in an exultant song.

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*Loftiest need and noblest love,
Fiery desire and doom of fate,
Brightly burn in my breast,
Drive me to deeds and to death !
Nothung ! Nothung ! So name I the sword !
Nothung ! Nothung ! Steel of my need !
Show me thy sharp and shearing tooth,
Torn from thy sheath to my side !*

“Are you indeed Siegmund?” cried Sieglinde in an intoxication of delight. “I am Sieglinde, your sister. You have won me as well as the sword !”

“You shall be both sister and bride to your brother,” sang Siegmund, “and the race of the Volsungs shall endure !”

And he drew her into his arms.

II

In a rocky and mountainous place Wotan was summoning the war-maiden, Brünnhilde. She was one of the Valkyries, love-children of his, whose duty it was to fly over battle fields and bear away the bodies of heroes to Valhalla ; and Wotan now commanded her to go to Siegmund's aid in his coming battle with Hunding, who was pursuing him.

She departed on her mission, and as she went

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Fricka arrived in her chariot drawn by rams. Fricka was the goddess of Law and Order, and she was in a passion of anger against Wotan for daring to protect Siegmund, who had outraged all law and all order, and who was himself the living pledge of Wotan's infidelity. Wotan unwisely showed his sympathy with those who had obeyed the commands of love, but Fricka had no sympathy with so irregular a point of view. It was bad enough for her to have to acknowledge the existence of the Valkyries; but she would not consent to this protection of Wotan's mortal offspring against the righteous wrath of Hunding. She would not go away until she had extracted from Wotan a reluctant promise that he would countermand his orders to Brunnhilde.

When Fricka had gone he summoned Brunnhilde again; she saw that he was troubled, and begged him to tell her the cause of his grief. "If I were to tell you," he said, "should I not be revealing the innermost secrets of my heart?" Brunnhilde reminded him that she was the reincarnation of himself, and that when he spoke to her it was as though he spoke to himself.

Looking solemnly into her eyes, then, he told her how, long ago, he had won the world for

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himself, and had found it necessary, in order to preserve his power, to stoop to deception and wrong-doing, in which he had been assisted by Loki. He told her how the Ring had come into his possession, and how, instead of returning it to the Rhine, he had given it in payment for Valhalla. He told her how Erda had warned him of disaster; how he had sought her out again, and, winning her by a love potion, had made her the mother of Brunnhilde and her eight sisters; how, warned by Erda of the doom that was hanging over the gods, he had taught the Valkyries to choose the bravest heroes from among mortals, so that they might be formed into a bodyguard for Valhalla. He told her how he had been afraid that Alberic might recover the Ring from Fafner, and so bring destruction to the gods; and how, to keep the Ring out of Alberic's hands, he had felt that a Hero would have to be found who, unhampered by the restrictions of godhead, would be brave and strong enough to wrest the treasure from Fafner. He told her of Siegmund's birth and his training, how he had hoped that Siegmund would be that Hero whom he needed; yet now, since Fricka had interposed, Siegmund would have to die. Alberic's curse rested even upon Wotan, who had

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once grasped the Ring ; for he must lose what he loved, and destroy him whom he prized most.

He paused for a moment in his bitter outburst and reflected. "That is the end for which Alberic is waiting!" he continued. "Now I remember the meaning of Erda's words : 'When he who has resigned love gets a son, the end of the gods will be at hand !' I hear that Alberic has by means of his gold found a woman who, without love, has borne him a child. Then take my blessing, Niebelung child ! What causes me so much grief, I give to you for an inheritance ! Sate your greed with the vain glitter of godhead !"

After this outburst Wotan sombrely commanded Brünnhilde to carry out Fricka's behest. He refused to be persuaded by her, and imperiously commanded her to go about her thankless task. She went away to the grotto where her horse Grane was resting, and from there saw the arrival of Sieglinde and Siegmund, who were fleeing from Hunding. Sieglinde was utterly exhausted ; she would not listen to the endearing words Siegmund was murmuring in her ear, but begged him to flee without delay and save himself. She had broken away from him, feeling that she had been hopelessly polluted

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by her marriage with Hunding, and that she was an unworthy bride for Siegmund.

But the sound of the horns drew nearer and terrified her with their threat of violence to her beloved. In an agony of fear she fell fainting to the ground, and Siegmund, placing her carefully in the shelter of a rock, sat down and waited beside her. While he was sitting there Brünnhilde came and warned him of his impending fate. She told him that though he would perish in the coming combat he would be borne off to Valhalla, there to live gloriously among heroes.

Siegmund had no fear of death, and asked Brünnhilde to tell him something of the place to which he was going. "Shall I find The Wolf, my father, there?" he asked. Yes, he would find his father there. "Will there be a wife for me in Valhalla?" Yes, wish-maidens would be waiting for him and Wotan's own daughter would serve him. "Tell me one thing more—will the beloved sister attend her brother, and shall Siegmund find Sieglinde there?" Alas, no. Sieglinde must still breathe the air of earth; Siegmund would not see her there.

"Then greet Valhalla for me, greet Wotan for me, greet The Wolf and all the heroes for me; greet also the lovely Wish-maidens for me. I

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will not follow you there!" said Siegmund, and nothing would persuade him or move him from his decision. If his father withdrew the protection promised to him with his hero's sword, he would still fight Hunding fearlessly, and would go to Hell rather than to Valhalla without his bride. But first he would kill her himself, and so save her from Hunding, for within her body she bore a pledge of their love.

Brünnhilde was touched with compassion at his fidelity, and in spite of her father's commands she promised to help him in the hour of battle. And with this promise, and laying Sieglinde quietly in a safe place, he set forth amid gathering storm-clouds to meet Hunding.

Sieglinde came to herself presently, awakened by a crash of thunder and the voices of Siegmund and Hunding shouting defiance to one another. She ran to try and separate them, but her strength failed her. Siegmund and Hunding closed in combat; the clash of their weapons was added to the noise of the storm; but Brünnhilde could be seen hovering in the air above Siegmund, covering him with her shield and speaking words of encouragement. But as he was about to fell Hunding to the earth a red glare of light broke through the clouds, and Wotan appeared stand-

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ing over Hunding and warding off Siegmund's blow with his spear. Brunnhilde retreated in terror; Siegmund's sword broke off short; in his breast Hunding's blade buried itself, and he fell dead. Sieglinde, who had heard his last cry, sank down beside him in a swoon. The glare died away and darkness gathered again over the scene; Brunnhilde returned, raised the unconscious Sieglinde, and carried her to where her horse was waiting.

Hunding drew his sword from Siegmund's body; but Wotan, who was looking with anguish at his fallen son, turned on the slayer with a look so terrible that Hunding fell stricken to death at the feet of the god. And then Wotan, in an outburst of terrible wrath, cursed Brunnhilde for her disobedience, and set out in pursuit of her as the clouds and thunder gathered again.

III

On the summit of a rocky mountain, high up among the clouds, a sunny plateau was sheltered by a curtain of pine trees that grew beside the overarching rock. From the plateau there was a view down into the world, where valleys and

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pastures lay wide to the horizon ; and as the wind whistled and blew among the rocks, clouds and mists kept sweeping up from the valley, now hiding, now revealing it. This was the place to which the Valkyries bore the bodies of warriors slain in battle ; and now, as a flash of lightning glimmered in the sky, it lit up the war maidens who came sweeping through the clouds with the bodies of heroes on their saddles.

As they arrived and led away their horses to the sheltered pastures below, they shouted and called to one another, signalling with their spears. Their voices were like the wind and the storm, echoing in wild melody round the rocky waste. When they had all arrived except Brünnhilde, and were wondering where she could be, one of the Valkyries, who was standing on a higher peak than the others, saw her in the distance riding through the sky more swiftly than ever Valkyrie had ridden before. But when at length she alighted on the plateau they found to their astonishment that she bore with her not a slain hero, but a living woman. She was terrified, and told them that she was being pursued by Wotan himself and that they must help her to shelter Sieglinde, whose life must at all costs be preserved.

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But the storm rose, the wind howled more and more desolately, and the Valkyries spoke together in terror of the anger of Wotan when he should overtake Brünnhilde. Sieglinde, who had been looking out over the waste sadly and blankly, started as she heard these words; and in a voice of despair begged Brünnhilde not to suffer in sorrow on her account, but if she had true kindness of heart to let her die where she was, far from Siegmund. But Brünnhilde answered her nobly and tenderly. "You must live and be brave," she said; "and bring to life that treasure that he has left with you; remember that you carry in your body a true Volsung!" And Sieglinde, illuminated by the thought and encouraged by the words, took fresh heart and begged them to rescue her and her babe.

The thunder increased and rolled among the crags with a deafening noise. Wotan was evidently coming near, and Brünnhilde, realising what his wrath might be, told Sieglinde that she must fly by herself into the forest—the same forest in which Fafnir had retired to guard his treasure—while Brünnhilde herself would remain to meet the wrath of Wotan.

"Fly quickly to the forest," she said; "try to bear all troubles bravely—hunger and thirst,

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thorns and rocks ; laugh when want and suffering torture you, for remember that in your body you bear the greatest hero of the world ! ” She put the broken pieces of Siegmund’s sword into Sieglinde’s hand. “ Keep for him these pieces of the sword, his father’s protector, which I saved for him. He shall live to wield the sword, and you must call him Siegfried—the joyful issue of the battle ! ”

Sieglinde, exalted with this new hope, hurried away towards the forest. In the midst of a fearful storm, and from the darkness of thunder clouds, the voice of Wotan was heard summoning Brünnhilde. The Valkyries tried to shield her from his sight, but he wrathfully accused them of sheltering a base traitor of his confidence, and ordered them from his presence. Then Brünnhilde stepped out from among them, saying that she was willing to submit to his punishment.

“ I do not punish you,” said Wotan. “ You punish yourself. It was through my will that you were born, and against my will you have revolted ; you were to carry out my orders, but you have rebelled against them ; you were my Wish-maid, yet your wishes have gone against mine ; you were to be a shield to me, and you have turned your shield against me ; you once

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chose heroes for me, and now you stir them up against me ! Now I tell you your doom—Wish-maid no more, Valkyrie no more ! Henceforth you remain merely—yourself !”

Brünnhilde was terrified at this sentence. “Am I no longer divine, then ?” she asked.

“I shall nevermore send you from Valhalla, nor appoint you to bring heroes to my hall ; you shall no more hand the flagon at the feasts of the gods ; you are banished for ever from my side !”

The Valkyries set up a cry of lamentation, calling on Wotan to withdraw this sentence ; but he threatened them with a similar doom if they did not instantly depart ; and with a woeful cry they fled hastily to the wood, mounted their horses and rode away through the storm clouds.

The height of Wotan's wrath was spent now, and as he and Brünnhilde were left alone he began to speak sorrowfully to her of the dreadful doom which she had incurred. Dreadful to him also was the fate of the hero Siegmund ; and though Brünnhilde reminded him that Sieglinde held in her womb a true son of his, Wotan refused at first to find comfort in the thought, even though the wandering mother carried also with her the broken splinters of the father's sword.

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As they talked, the storm departed from about the mountain and the clouds floated away; a calm followed the tumult that had echoed about that wild place; twilight fell in a golden radiance, and darkness crept slowly up from the valley. Then Wotan told Brünnhilde of her final doom: she would be left there, with the spell of sleep upon her, for any passing mortal to wake and possess. "Oh!" she cried, "grant me one thing, lest in my sleep I fall a prey to some coward: let my sleep be guarded by such terrors that only the most fearless hero dare break through to find me. Let fire enfold me—fire that will destroy anyone who tries to approach my sleeping-place!"

Wotan, whose soul was moved with sorrow at the fate of his favourite child, promised to grant her request. Her bed should be lit with bridal torches the brightest that had ever burned, and she should be girt about with a fire so terrible that no one dare approach her except the bravest hero, who would be freer even than a god.

Then Wotan kissed her slowly on both eyes, which closed in slumber; and as she sank unconscious in his arms he laid her tenderly down on a mossy bank under the shadow of a fir tree. He looked long and mournfully at her; he closed the

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vizor of her helmet and covered her with a long shield of steel, placing her spear beside her.

Then he walked to the middle of the plateau and, looking out into the sky, in a loud voice summoned Loki, the god of Lies and Intellect.

He bade him bring fire and spread an appearance of flames about the plateau; and as he called he struck the point of his spear thrice against the rock. Wherever it struck a great semblance of fire broke out, which quickly streamed about the plateau until the night was lit with the glare of leaping flames. Then Wotan drew a circle round Brunnhilde with his spear, saying: "He who fears my weapon shall never break through this fire!" A true hero, when he came, would find the fire but a harmless lie and deception, being only a production of Loki's skill—the appearance of fire without its reality.

But now, in the gathering darkness, the appearance at least was there; the flames leaped and wavered until their glow spread over the whole plateau; and as Wotan stepped away from the rock they seemed to rise and flow together into a crimson sea of fire.

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I

AFTER the discomfiture of Alberic, Mimi, his creature, had established himself at a forge in the forest where all day long he worked industriously. Everything was dark and dirty within the smithy, but when Mimi looked up from his work he could see through the openings behind the forge the green vistas of the forest. He did not often look up, however, for he took no interest in beautiful things; his mind was as dark as the caverns of Niebelheim, from whence he had come.

One day he was working among the cinders forging a sword, and grumbling to himself that however carefully he made it the unruly young Siegfried would be certain to break it, as he had broken many others that Mimi had made for him. The only thing that made Mimi persevere was the hope that, if he could only forge a stout enough sword, Siegfried, who did not know what fear was, might go and kill Fafner the

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dragon with it, and so secure for Mimi the Ring and treasure that Fafner guarded.

Presently this Siegfried came in, a youth glowing with health and vigour and brimming over with energy and high spirits. He was leading a bear that he had caught in the forest, and he terrified Mimi by urging the bear towards him and chasing him about the forge with it, until he tired of the game and with a blow sent the bear back into the forest.

When Mimi had recovered from his fright he showed Siegfried the new sword that he had been forging, and asked him to try it. Siegfried smashed it on the anvil with one blow, and then broke out into a rage at the stupidity of the smith who could make nothing better than a toy sword. And even when Mimi tremblingly brought the boy his food he knocked it over, saying, "You can swill your slops yourself!" Mimi was shocked, and began a whining recital of all the services he had rendered to Siegfried; how he had tended him when he was a baby, made him toys, taught him all sorts of useful knowledge, and yet received nothing but abuse for it all. And Siegfried, who was never ashamed of anything he felt or did, explained that although it was all true he nevertheless felt nothing but loathing

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and dislike for Mimi, and that he had no stronger impulse than to take the dwarf and wring his neck. Yet somehow he always came back to the forge; and he wondered how it was that he had this longing to return when he disliked the dwarf so much.

Mimi pretended to explain it by saying that Siegfried was his son; but the boy told him that could not be, for he had watched the birds and the foxes in the forest, and seen that there were mothers as well as fathers before there were children; and he asked, if Mimi were really his father, where his mother was? And when the dwarf said that he had no mother, but that Mimi was his father and mother in one, Siegfried told him he was a liar, for the children of birds and beasts were like their parents, while Siegfried, when he had looked at his image in the water, had found no likeness to Mimi. And he seized the unlucky dwarf and nearly strangled him, commanding him to tell him the truth about his father and mother.

"Listen, then," cried Mimi, choking; "you thankless wretch!" I am not your father, nor even of your blood, and yet you owe everything to me. Nicely you have repaid me! Once I

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found a woman wailing in the wood, and I helped her to this cavern and sheltered her by the fire. She brought forth a child in anguish and tears; I did everything I could for her, but she seemed to be overwhelmed with grief; soon she died, but her son Siegfried lived. She gave you into my charge, and I have toiled and made sacrifices for you. . . ." Siegfried interrupted him. "I have heard all about that before. Tell me who called me Siegfried?"

"Your mother told me that I must call you by that name," said the dwarf.

"And what was my mother's name, and my father's?"

Mimi answered that his mother's name was Sieglinde, but that he had never heard the name of his father; and he went on with his whining protestations. Siegfried asked him for a sign that what he had said was true, and Mimi went and brought the broken pieces of a sword, saying that his mother had left these in reward for the attention she had received. "She told me that your father had wielded the sword in his last fight, when he was killed."

Siegfried was greatly stirred by what the dwarf had told him. "You shall weld the fragments anew for me," he said; "I will swing my own

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sword. Now, if you are worth anything, show your skill, and do not dare to deceive me with any other sword, or I will hammer the life out of you! I am going to roam out into the world and never come back to you; I shall be free at last, and you will not see me any more!" And Siegfried ran out shouting into the forest.

While Mimi was sitting disconsolately looking at the fragments of the sword he was aroused by a voice, and saw a stranger, dressed in a long blue cloak and wearing a hat whose brim hung over one eye, standing in the doorway. The stranger asked for shelter; and Mimi, who was startled at the apparition, asked what his name might be? "I am called the Wanderer," replied the stranger, "for I have wandered all over the world. All manner of knowledge is revealed to me; I can guess riddles and foretell other people's misfortunes."

"I know all I want to know," answered Mimi, "so good-day, Mr. Know-all."

But the Wanderer sat down by the fire. "I will stake my head," he said, "that you cannot ask me any question that I cannot answer truly." So Mimi, in order to get rid of him, consented to put three questions. First he asked him who

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it was that lived under the earth ; secondly, what race lived on the surface of the earth ; and thirdly, who it was that lived in the clouds. And to these questions the Wanderer replied : first, that the Niebelungs dwelt under the earth, whom Alberic had subdued by the power of the Ring ; secondly, that the giants Fasolt and Fafner were the princes of the earth, and that Fafner, having killed his brother, now guarded the Ring alone ; and thirdly, that in the cloud-land of Valhalla lived the gods, ruled by Wotan, who had made himself a spear out of the World's Ash-tree, and that on the shaft of it legends and runes of wisdom were written. As he answered he struck the ground with his spear and a clap of thunder reverberated through the forest.

Mimi, startled, began to guess that the stranger was Wotan himself, wandering the earth in disguise ; and he was still more anxious to be rid of him. But the Wanderer, in his turn, insisted on asking Mimi three questions, and on holding the dwarf's head as a forfeit for the answers.

"Tell me first," said the Wanderer, "what race is it that Wotan has most loved and most punished ? Mimi replied that it was the Volsungs,

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and told the story of Siegmund and Sieglinde. Then the Wanderer asked what sword it would be by which Siegfried would strike the dragon Fafner dead. "The sword 'Nothung'!" cried Mimi—"the sword that Wotan struck into the ash tree; the sword that Siegmund plucked out, and the pieces of which are preserved by a wise smith!" In his third question the Wanderer asked Mimi who it was that should forge the sword anew. But the dwarf was terrified, saying that he was unable to mend it, that the splinters could not be melted, and that he did not know how or by whom the sword could ever be remade.

Then the Wanderer, rising from the hearth, said, "You have failed to answer me, and you are doomed. The only one who can forge the sword 'Nothung' again will be he who has never known Fear; and to him I leave your head as a forfeit." And the Wanderer, laughing, disappeared into the wood in a blink of lightning which terrified the wretched little dwarf.

He sank back on his stool, and gazed for a while after the stranger into the sunlit depths of the forest. He had something like a fit, and thought that the dragon Fafner was coming for him, and that he heard its terrible roaring; but

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it was only Siegfried, who came in laughing and looking for Mimi, asking if the sword were finished yet. Mimi knew that he could never mend it, and he realised that Siegfried, who had never known what fear was, must be the one whom the Wanderer had meant when he spoke of the forger of the sword. He wished that among all the other things he had taught Siegfried he had also taught him what fear was; and he tried now to inspire him with terror. He spoke of the forest at night, of the vague murmurs and savage voices of the wild beasts that lurked there in the darkness; he spoke of the awful dragon Fafner who guarded the entrance to his treasure cave and mangled and devoured all who came within his reach.

But instead of being frightened Siegfried was only interested; he wanted to know where the dragon was, so that he might go and find it. Mimi told him that the dragon dwelt in the Cave of Envy, at the eastern side of the wood.

"Is that anywhere near the World?" asked Siegfried. And when Mimi told him that the World was close by the cavern, the boy said, "Then you shall lead me there; I will find out what this Fear is, and then I shall go forth into the World."

But he remembered that he wanted the sword,

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and grew angry again with Mimi because it was not ready. "I will shape it myself," he cried.

He pushed Mimi aside, put a heap of fuel on the fire, blew it up into a glowing mass, fixed the pieces of the sword in a vice, and filed them into powder. Mimi tried to show him that he was doing it the wrong way, but Siegfried took no notice of him. The filings were put into a crucible, which was placed in the forge, and the youth blew up the fire into a mighty flame, singing while he worked the bellows.

Mimi looked on with awe, but gradually a crafty expression stole over his face. He saw that Siegfried would be successful in forging the sword again, and realized that with its aid he would be able to conquer the dragon. Mimi therefore decided that when Siegfried came back faint and weary from his fight with the dragon he would have ready for him a sleeping-draught; so that while he slept the dwarf could kill him and possess himself of the Ring and the treasure. He even began to prepare the draught then and there, while Siegfried, who did not notice him, was pouring the molten steel into the mould, tempering it, and thrusting it into the fire again to heat it.

At last the steel came out red-hot and Sieg-

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fried began to hammer it on the anvil, singing the while :—

Hoho! hoho! hohei!
Beat me, my hammer, a hero's blade!
Hoho! hahei! hoho! hahei!
Once blood made fair thy fading blue,
Its reddening ripples ran over thee:
Cold laughter was thine,
Licking the heat with thy chill!
Heiaho! haha! haheiaha!
Now has the fire forced thee to flame,
Thy hardness yields to the hammer's yoke,
Spiteful sparks thou art spitting
At me that must tame thee with toil!
Heiaho-hohohoho! hahei!

When the blade was beaten out, Siegfried plunged it into the water and heated it in the fire again; then he filed and sharpened it, and fitted a handle to it. When it was quite finished he swung it high in the air, round and round his head, singing joyfully :

Nothung! Nothung! Sword of my need!
From death I have saved thee to-day!
Spent was thy life, in splinters lost,
Now bright is thy burning and brave!
Sharp is thy splendour, show it to thieves:
Break them and bend them, rascal and rogue!
See, Mimi the smith,
So sheareth Siegfried's sword.

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With the last words he struck the anvil a mighty blow that split it from top to bottom; and Mimi grovelled on the ground in terror.

II

Alberic kept a sullen watch at the entrance to Fafner's cave. It was night, and the dwarf was gloomily reflecting on his misfortunes and wondering if anyone would come to kill the dragon, when a gust of wind sighed through the forest, a light shone, and Wotan the Wanderer appeared. Alberic recognised his enemy and began to threaten and insult him, asking him what further humiliation he could still desire to inflict on his foes.

"I came to watch, not to work," said Wotan; and he told the dwarf that it was not in his plans to take any step to protect his heroic offspring, and that the only creature Alberic need fear was Mimi, who was, in fact, plotting to gain possession of the Ring. And to show Alberic the truth of his words Wotan suggested that they should waken the dragon and warn him.

In answer to his hail Fafner's deep drowsy voice came out of the cavern demanding who it

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was that spoke to him ; and Alberic replied that a hero was coming who had sworn to slay Fafner for the sake of the Ring. Alberic suggested that Fafner should hand the Ring over to him, and thus free himself from danger. But Fafner refused and went to sleep again, while Wotan, laughing derisively at the discomfiture of Alberic, disappeared again in a gust of wind.

Alberic hid in a cleft of the rock and watched the dawn stealing through the glades of the forest. As day broke Mimi and Siegfried appeared, Siegfried girt with his new sword and eager for the battle. While they were waiting for the dragon to come out Mimi tried once more to awake Siegfried's fears, and told him how the dragon breathed out poison from his nostrils, and covered his victims with a fearful slime that shrivelled up their flesh and bones ; told him also of the terrible twisted tail with which he entangled those who were bold enough to approach him, and ground up their limbs like glass.

"I will keep clear of his tail," said Siegfried ; "but tell me, has he a heart?" "Yes," said Mimi ; he has a cruel and hard heart."

"Well then," said Siegfried, "I will strike straight at his heart. Do you think that will be like fear? I am afraid I shall not know much

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about fear even then." Siegfried sent Mimi away, and sat down beneath a great lime tree to await the combat.

The smell of the morning came fresh and sweet to his nostrils; he felt happy to be alone, glad to be rid of Mimi, whom he hoped that he would never see again. He thought of his father, and wondered what he had been like. "Like me, I suppose, for if Mimi had a son he would be like Mimi—small and humpbacked, with great hanging ears and bleary eyes." He leaned back and looked up through the branches of the tree into the green depths where the light was playing, and where rose the deep murmuring music of the forest. He sat in silence for a long time and listened to the voices of the leaves, to which was presently added the beautiful chorus of the birds that sang in the thicket. One bird, perched just over his head, particularly attracted his attention. He wished he could understand what it was saying, and that he could sing like it. Mimi had once said that it was possible to learn the language of birds; if only he knew the way! And then his eye fell on a clump of reeds, and he jumped up and roughly fashioned a pipe out of one of them, meaning to imitate the bird's song on it. But when he tried he found that

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the sound of the pipe was not at all like the voice of the bird, which had now stopped singing, and seemed to be watching Siegfried. He threw the reed away in disgust and, feeling the need to make music of some kind, took his horn and blew a call on it.

As the sound echoed through the aisles of the forest there was a stir in the cave, and Fafner, a huge beast in the shape of a lizard, came crawling out, yawning and growling. Siegfried, not at all frightened, accosted him, and asked him if he could teach him what Fear was; but when Fafner gnashed his teeth, Siegfried only admired the glistening fangs; and presently, when Fafner challenged him, he drew his sword and faced the dragon. The huge tail was bent round to entangle him, but the boy leapt on one side to avoid it. His sword flashed and fell; the dragon bellowed and heaved himself up as though to fall on him, and in doing so it exposed its heart, into which Siegfried plunged his sword.

The dragon sank back mortally wounded; and as it lay dying it spoke admiringly of the courage of the youth who had slain it, and told Siegfried the story of Fasolt and the gold. With its last words it warned him of the treachery of Mimi.

When it was dead Siegfried went to pull his

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sword out of the dragon's heart ; and as he did so some of the blood spurted on to his hand. It burned his flesh, and he instinctively raised his hand to his mouth and licked off the blood. At that moment his attention was drawn once more to the singing of the bird ; this time he felt that he understood what the song meant, and he wondered if it was the taste of the blood that had taught him. The voice rose clear above the murmur of the branches.

*Hey ! Siegfried is hvir to the Nibelung's hoard !
Oh, turn to the hole where the treasure is hid !
Would he but take him the Tarnhelm
'Twould teach him a wonderful deed :
But the Ring if he won it and wore it
Would make him the lord of the world !*

Siegfried, who listened wonderingly, thanked the bird for its advice and disappeared into the cave in search of the Tarnhelm.

When he had gone Mimi and Alberic both slunk out of their hiding-places and met in the open before the cavern. They began to quarrel about the treasure, reproaching each other and wrangling as to what shares they would have in it ; and presently hid themselves again as they saw Siegfried come out of the cave with the Tarnhelm and the Ring in his hand. But he

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looked at his prizes doubtfully, not knowing what use he could possibly make of them, and wondering what the bird had meant when it advised him to secure them.

He stood still. From above came the increasing rustle and murmur of the branches; as the breeze wandered through them they gave out a deep harmonious music that stirred Siegfried's young heart to its depths. Above the murmurs he presently distinguished the voice of the bird again.

*Hey! Siegfried is heir to the Helm and the Ring!
Oh, trust not to Mimi the treacherous man!
If he hearken with heed to the rogue and his rascally speech,
As his heart may mean shall Mimi be heard,
So magic the might of the blood!*

And while the bird was singing Mimi came back, asking Siegfried if he had yet learnt what fear was. "I have not found a teacher yet," said Siegfried.

"But have you not slain the dragon, then?" asked Mimi.

"Yes," replied the boy, "but though it was grim and dreadful enough in life, there are things living that I hate more. More than I hated the dragon have I learned to hate him who made me kill it!"

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Mimi tried to speak affectionately to Siegfried; but his sentences, although they issued from his lips in winning and fawning words, fell on Siegfried's ears formed in words of malice and threatening; the dwarf, in spite of himself, betrayed the hatred and the evil that were in his heart. He spoke hypocritically of the boy's fatigue, and tried to induce him to take the drink which he had prepared; but Siegfried saw through his schemes, and at this final example of treachery his hatred for Mimi burst beyond bounds, and he struck the dwarf dead with one stroke of his sword. Then he dragged the body to the mouth of the cave and left it there with the carcass of the dragon to guard the treasures of the underworld.

But he was tired by all that he had done and stretched himself once more under the lime tree, gradually falling into a drowsy repose under the cool shadow of its branches. In a dreamy way he began to talk to the bird, which had ceased its song. "Sing again, little bird," he said. "You have been silent too long. I can see you up there rocking on the branches with brothers and sisters soaring about you, while I sit here alone. Alas! I have no brothers and sisters, I have only had an ugly dwarf for a companion. Oh, friendly little bird, if you could

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only find me a mate! I have looked so often, and have never found one; surely you could guide me?"

Then he heard the voice of the bird again singing clearly among the branches.

*Hey! Siegfried has smitten the dwarf to his death!
Now might he but know of the marvellous maid:
Far on the fell she sleeps,
The fire enfolds her hall,
If he win through the blaze, if he waken the bride,
Brünnhilde then were his own!*

Siegfried started to his feet. "Oh, heavenly song!" he cried, "it set something burning in my veins and overpowering my heart. Tell me, little friend, what it is." And the bird answered:

*Glad out of grief is my greeting of love,
Wisely from woe I have woven my song,
None save in sighs understand!*

"I will go forth," cried Siegfried; "I will climb towards the rocky place; I will find love; tell me once more if I shall break through the fire and win this bride!"

*The bride to win, Brünnhilde to wake
Is no coward's feat
But the knight's that knows not fear!*

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And Siegfried laughed with delight. "One who does not know what fear is?" My little friend, that is myself! Only to-day I tried to learn, but Fafner could not teach me. I long now to learn it from this Brunnhilde; so lead the way and let me follow where you fly!"

The bird fluttered out from the trees, hovered over Siegfried for a minute, then flew boldly away; and the hero followed.

III

In the dead of night, in a storm of thunder and lightning, Wotan stood before the rocky cleft in which Erda the Earth Mother slept her eternal sleep. He summoned her, and presently she appeared in a blue glimmer, covered with hoar frost and radiating a dim light from the robe that covered her. Wotan told her that he had come to her because she was possessed of all wisdom and knew everything that had happened and would happen, and he wished her now to help him in his perplexity at the fate that was hanging over the gods. Erda answered that she was only wise while she was asleep and dreaming her eternal dream of the world's life; why did

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Wotan not go to the three Norns who sat spinning the cord of Destiny? Or, better still, why did he not go to the Valkyrie whom Erda had borne to him, and who to her father's divinity joined the wisdom and knowledge of her mother?

But Wotan sadly answered that Brunnhilde had disobeyed him, and he told her of the fate which he had reserved for the Valkyrie; Erda herself must disclose the future to him.

But he could get no answer from Erda, to whom wakefulness meant bewilderment; and Wotan, angrily calling her *unwise*, ordered her to resume her endless sleep, and told her that he was prepared to meet the doom of the gods and to resign the world, which he had once in his wrath handed over to the Niebelungs, now to the hero son of the Volsungs. He told her of Siegfried's search for Brunnhilde and of his willingness that she of her own act should free the world from the power of the gods and return the gold to the Rhine. And with that he dismissed the Earth Mother: the blue glimmer vanished, the storm died away; and in the moonlight that now quietly shone over the scene Wotan saw Siegfried approaching.

He asked the boy where he was going, and

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Siegfried, who had lost sight of the friendly bird, gave the Wanderer an account of all his adventures since he had forged the sword. But as the Wanderer seemed disposed to hold him in conversation, and as Siegfried was impatient to reach the fiery rock where Brünnhilde slept, he ordered the old man to get out of his way, and even threatened him with the loss of his remaining eye if he barred his progress any longer. This roused Wotan's anger; in awful tones he announced that he himself was the guardian of the rock where Brünnhilde slept, and forbade Siegfried, on peril of his life, to advance any further.

While he was speaking the moon had set and the darkness that comes before dawn had spread over the scene. In the gloomy distance could be seen the faint glow of a fire; and Wotan pointed it out to Siegfried, telling him that there were the lightnings and vapours that guarded the hill where Brünnhilde slept, and he warned the youth that anyone who attempted to pass through them would be destroyed.

But Siegfried, upon whom the thought of fear made no impression, laughed at Wotan's threats, and at the sacred spear of authority held out to bar his progress. Once before, when Siegmund

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fought, sword and spear had met, and the sword had been shattered; but now the spear in its turn was broken, for Siegfried snapped it in pieces with one stroke of his sword. In a clap of thunder Wotan vanished, conscious that his godhead had been defied by a hero, and that it would be powerless against him. Fiery clouds descended in the place where he had been and enveloped Siegfried in a rolling sea of flame.

He shouted and, sounding his horn merrily, plunged into the fire. It leaped and reverberated all about him, but it did not harm him; he was neither dismayed nor hurt by it; as he blew his horn lustily its notes blended with the crackling and spitting and rushing whisper of the flames. And at last they grew lighter, the crackling noises died away, and he stepped out of the blinding glow on to a rocky platform under the fir tree. In the clear light and coolness of the morning he came upon Brünnhilde lying asleep in her coat of mail.

He raised the shield and the vizor and looked upon her face; and as he looked a shuddering emotion, unknown to him before, took hold of him. Timidly and wonderingly he unfastened the helmet, so that Brünnhilde's long tawny hair fell down about her shoulders; he unfastened the

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corslet and greaves, until at last she lay before him dressed in clinging white, in all the softness of her womanhood. His senses reeled as he bent over her with his head on her breast; he wondered what he must do to awaken her; and as the thrills of dawning love and desire coursed through his blood he realised that it had been left to a woman to teach him what Fear was! Passionately he printed a kiss on her lips; she opened her eyes, and the two remained for a moment gazing at each other in wonder.

Brünnhilde slowly raised herself. Looking round her, she welcomed the sun and the daylight, and asked who it was that had awakened her.

Siegfried told her his name; and when she realised that he was indeed the Hero who had been destined for her she hailed him with solemn gladness, and greeted him as the lord of Life and of the World. Gradually, as emotion kindled in both, the fire of their love rose into a blinding flame of passion; and though for a moment, when Brünnhilde realised that she was now but a mortal woman, she felt a terrified regret for the divinity that had protected her, her fears were drowned in the fountain of earthly, mortal love that welled up in her. "Farewell, Valhalla!"

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she cried, "Farewell, stately castle ! Farewell, divine might and omnipotence ! Let the Norns break their cord of Destiny, let night fall on the gods ! For us a light of love, a laughter of death !"

And echoing Siegfried's cry of ecstasy she threw herself into his arms.

The TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Prologue

ON Brünnhilde's rock, in the darkest hour of the night, the three Norns were at work spinning their golden thread of Destiny. Loki's flames glimmered and glared in the distance ; but the Norns were occupied with their fateful toil, and as they worked they sang in turn the history and fate of the world. The first Norn sang of how she once sat spinning under the World's Ash tree when its wonderful verdure shaded the universe, and the Spring of Wisdom welled beneath its branches ; how Wotan came to drink at the fountain ; how he sacrificed one eye for the boon of knowledge which enabled him to win Fricka ; how he broke off an arm of the ash tree to make a spear shaft, and how the ash tree cankered at the wound and finally withered ; how even the stream of Wisdom dried up so that the Norns could no longer spin in that place but had to come to the fir tree on Brünnhilde's rock.

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Then the speaker threw the end of the cord to the second Norn, who took up the spinning and the song. She sang of how Wotan had inscribed runes on the shaft of his spear—formulas and treaties by means of which he had ruled the world; of how the spear had been destroyed by Siegfried in battle; and of how Wotan had gathered together the warriors of Valhalla and made them destroy the ruins of the ash tree. And then the third Norn took up the tale of Destiny. She told of how the wood of the ash tree was piled up into a great pyre round Valhalla, where Wotan sat in the midst of the gods. There was a little doubt as to how the story went on; if the wood took fire and burnt up Valhalla, that would be an end to the power of the gods. Loki was stationed in an appearance of flame about Brünnhilde's rock; Wotan had plunged the broken shaft of his spear into Loki's burning heart, and then——

The golden cord suddenly snapped; the dreary Norns, who had been singing through the waning darkness, rose and fled in terror; their power and knowledge had come to an end; and knotting themselves together with the broken fragments of the cord, they disappeared from the world.

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Day broke ; and as the sun shone down upon the rocky platform, hiding the glow of the fire, Siegfried came out from a cave with Brünnhilde. Their time of honeymoon was over ; Brünnhilde had taught her lover many things from the sacred knowledge of her divine days ; and Siegfried, who was about to depart to accomplish more heroic deeds, gave her the golden Ring as a sign of his love and constancy. Brünnhilde's last gift to him was her noble horse Grane, who had so often carried her in her Valkyrie flights. When they had tenderly and passionately embraced one another the lovers separated ; Siegfried to pursue his heroic mission, Brünnhilde to wait for him on her fire-girt rock. She looked earnestly and longingly after him as he took his way down the rocky path ; and long after he was out of sight she could hear the notes of his horn, with which he signalled a gay good-bye to her.

I

The rulers of the Rhine were the race of the Gibichungs ; and in a great barbaric hall that was wide open to the banks of the river dwelt Gunther, the chief of the race, with his sister

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Gutrune. It was their mother whom Alberic had tempted by the power of his gold, and who had borne him a son, called Hagen.

This Hagen had come to visit his half-brother ; they were sitting in the great hall of the Gibichungs looking out on a wide and placid reach of the river ; and they were talking of the glories of the Gibichung race and the wonderful things that had been done by them. Hagen spoke of the continuance of that race. What a pity it was that neither Gunther nor his sister was married ! He said this with a very crafty intention ; for he knew all about Siegfried and Brünnhilde, and Siegfried's possession of the Ring ; and in continuance of his father's ambition to recover possession of the gold he was busy on a scheme of treachery whereby he might wrest it from Siegfried. So when Gunther complained that there was no one for him to marry, Hagen fired his imagination by telling him of the beautiful maiden who lay sleeping on the fire-girt rock. Unfortunately, added Hagen, no one could pierce through these flames but the youth Siegfried, who had conquered the dragon and possessed himself of the treasure of the Niebelungs. But what an admirable thing it would be if Gutrune were to make an alliance with this heroic Sieg-

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fried! Siegfried would then be sufficiently the slave of her charms to use his magic powers in favour of Gunther, and to win for him the sleeping Brünnhilde. And when the brother and sister nodded their heads and asked how it was all to be accomplished, Hagen had a method ready made. There was a love philtre that Gutrune might give to Siegfried which had the power of obliterating memory, making a man forget all oaths and promises and enslaving him entirely to the administrator of the drug. And as Gunther and Gutrune thought this a very good plan there was nothing to be done but to await the arrival of Siegfried.

Just then the sound of a horn was heard in the distance. Hagen ran down to the river bank and, looking down the stream, said he saw a boat containing a horse and man which was being rapidly driven against the current. Surely no one else was strong enough for that but Siegfried! And Hagen hailed him loudly. Siegfried soon came up to the hall; first he landed his horse, and then strode up to the men on the bank, saying, "Which of you is Gibich's son?" Siegfried had heard of Gunther's fame as the lord of that part of the Rhine, and he came now to offer him either friendship or battle. Gunther made

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him welcome, and giving the horse to Hagen he led Siegfried up into the hall. Hagen soon came back, and the three men began to talk of Siegfried's prowess, Hagen especially betraying great interest in the Niebelung's treasure. "I had almost forgotten about the gold," said Siegfried; "that shows how much I value it! I left it in the cave where the dragon used to guard it."

"And you brought nothing away with you?" asked Hagen.

"Nothing but this steel-work," said Siegfried, pointing to the Tarnhelm which was hanging at his girdle, "and I do not know of what use it may be."

"Why, that is the Tarnhelm!" said Hagen, and he told Siegfried about its marvellous properties. Then Siegfried told him that he had also taken a ring, but that it was worn by his sweetheart; and Hagen knew that it must be Brunnhilde who kept it.

Gutrune now appeared with a horn full of mead for Siegfried; and he, bowing gratefully, took it and drank it, murmuring a toast to his absent bride. But Gutrune, who knew the properties of the drink, looked down abashed as Siegfried handed back the horn to her; and as he looked at her the poison in the cup began its

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work and his eyes kindled with fire. He seized her by the hand, told her of his new-born passion, and said: "When I offered myself to your brother he rejected my help. Would you do the same if I asked you?"

But Gutrune hung her head bashfully, and with a gesture expressive of her unworthiness went slowly out of the room, while Siegfried gazed after her spellbound.

He asked Gunther if he had a wife, and when Gunther said that the only woman he desired lay on a rock far away surrounded by fire, the words brought no picture of Brünnhilde to Siegfried's memory. But he told Gunther that he was not afraid of the fire, and that if Gutrune were given to him in marriage he would go and win Brünnhilde for Gunther.

"How can you manage that?" asked Gunther. Siegfried replied that by wearing the Tarnhelm he could go to her in Gunther's shape. So, drinking a cup of wine in which a few drops of their blood had been mingled, Siegfried and Gunther swore an oath of brotherhood. Hagen, however, did not join in the oath; when the others had drained the cup he smote it in half with his sword, excusing himself from the act on account of his bastard origin.

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Siegfried, who would not wait for a moment, set forth again in his skiff accompanied by Gunther, while Hagen sat meditating in the hall as they floated away. He realised gloatingly that although the two adventurers thought that they were serving their own ends they were in reality serving his, and that he might yet be the owner of the Ring.

Brünnhilde meanwhile was sitting alone on her rock. She had been thinking fondly of her absent lover, gazing on his ring and, overwhelmed by tender memories, covering it with kisses, when she heard a sound once familiar to her—the sound of a horse galloping in the sky. It was Valtraute, one of her Valkyrie sisters, who in spite of Wotan's orders had come to visit her. She was very much agitated, and she told Brünnhilde how, since the Valkyrie's banishment, Wotan had entirely changed. He no longer took any pleasure in the heroes of Valhalla nor in sending forth the Valkyries to battle, but had taken to wandering in the world by himself. Lately he had come back with his spear broken in splinters; he had summoned his warriors, made them hew down the World's Ash tree,

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and build it up in faggots round the hall of Valhalla. Then he had called all the gods round him; and since then he had sat on his throne without speaking, holding the splintered spear in his hand. He would no longer eat the love apples that Freia guarded; he had sent out his two black ravens into the world, and seemed only to be waiting for what news they would bring him. All his daughters had pressed round him trying to comfort him, but they could not quiet his sighs nor cheer his heart; he spoke dreamily of Brünnhilde, and said that only on the day when she gave back the Ring to the daughters of the Rhine would the curse be lifted from gods and men.

So Valtraute had come to ask her sister if she would not carry out Wotan's wish and save the gods. But to Brünnhilde, who had been tasting the joys of mortal love, this tale of gods sitting in their cloudy home, from which she was excluded, seemed vain and dreamy. "You cannot know what this Ring is to me," she said. "It is more than the honour of the gods, more than the fame of Valhalla. It is Siegfried's love that shines out of it on me—Siegfried's love! You may tell the gods that I will not forego that love, and that I would rather see Valhalla's glory in ruins!"

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Valtraute, with a cry of woe, rushed to where her horse was standing, and mounting it, she galloped away in a brightly-lit cloud.

The shadows of evening began to fall, and in the dusk the fire glimmered redly again. It had grown familiar and not unfriendly to Brünnhilde; she was watching its mysterious glow when she heard the notes of Siegfried's horn. Joyfully she hurried to meet him; but when the flames, leaping up and then sinking down again, disclosed the fearless one who had braved their terrors, she saw not the form of Siegfried, but the form of a stranger. "I am betrayed!" she cried, retreating in alarm. "Who are you?"

"I have come to you as a lover," said the stranger, in a voice with which she was unfamiliar—"a lover who is not afraid of your fire. I have come to claim you as a wife, so you must follow me willingly."

Brünnhilde was terrified; who was this stranger, who had performed a feat which only Siegfried was capable of? She thought that he must be a spirit, but he told her that he was a Gibichung and that his name was Gunther. "Ah, Wotan!" cried Brünnhilde to herself, "Oh terrible god! Now I understand the meaning of your punishment and how you have driven me to

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shame and misery ! " But the stranger cut short her words, ordering her to show him the way to the cave. With a last gesture of resistance she stretched out the finger that bore Siegfried's ring, commanding him not to come near her, for that in the strength of the ring she would be able to resist him.

"Then I must take the Ring from you," cried the stranger ; and he sprang forward and tried to wrest it from her. She struggled, slipped away, was pursued and caught again ; and at last the Ring was plucked from her finger, and with a loud cry she sank back exhausted. With a commanding gesture he drove her into the cave, but he himself paused on the threshold and, drawing his sword and speaking in the natural voice of Siegfried, he said : "Be my witness, sword Nothung, that I woo in chastity. You shall separate me from my brother's bride !"

And he followed Brünnhilde into the cave.

II

It was Hagen's business to keep watch at night outside the hall of the Gibichungs ; and sometimes, when all the world was resting, and there

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was no sound but the murmur of the Rhine at his feet, he would fall asleep.

He was sleeping there now. As the moon sailed from behind a cloud it showed him sitting against a wall, his spear in his hand and his shield by his side. The river flowed at his feet; beyond it a mountain path straggled up the rocky slope towards the hills, where three altar stones stood by the path—one dedicated to Fricka, one to Wotan, and one to Donner.

The moonlight shone on another figure crouching at the sleeping Hagen's knees; it was Alberic, his father, who had come to prompt his dreams, and to remind him that Wotan, who had once wrested the Ring from Alberic, had at last been vanquished by his own Volsung offspring, that his spear of authority was shattered, and that he waited only for the final destruction of the gods.

Hagen, speaking in his dreams, asked who would inherit the power of the gods; and Alberic promised his son that they two should inherit the world if only the Ring could be recovered from Siegfried before he had time to restore it to the Rhine maidens. Hagen swore to his father that he would get possession of the Ring, and with that promise Alberic disappeared into the shadows, while morning broke over the distant

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reaches of the river. Quickly the colours of dawn flowed across the sky ; the river changed from lead to silver, from silver to fiery gold ; the sun rose and shone over the wide waters ; and in its first light Siegfried arrived and called to Hagen to awaken him. Hagen rose yawning and asked Siegfried for his news ; and he heard that Brünnhilde had been mastered, and that she and Gunther were following Siegfried in a boat.

Gutrune was awakened and brought to hear the news also ; she and Hagen questioned Siegfried closely as to how the capture had been made, and he told them how he had gone through the fire in Gunther's shape and lain all night in the cave with Brünnhilde. Gutrune was very anxious to know how it happened that Siegfried had taken the bride for himself instead of for Gunther ; but Siegfried, pointing to his sword, said : " Between east and west lies the north : so near was Brünnhilde to me—no nearer ; and at the first flush of dawn she came through the fire with me, and when we came near the river bank Gunther and I changed places in a flash by the magic of the Tarnhelm. I flew here by the power of the same helmet, and they are coming along the river with the morning breeze. Let us get ready to receive them ! "

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Gutrune was amazed at Siegfried's prowess, and pretended to be even a little frightened ; but she bestirred herself to make ready for the newcomers, saying that if Brünnhilde had a warm welcome she might remain with them the more gladly ; and Siegfried went with her to help with the preparations.

Then Hagen, climbing to a high piece of ground, blew on his great cattle horn and summoned all the Gibichungs with the cry of the tribe. Other horns and cries answered him from near and far, and presently his vassals began to run hastily in from different mountain roads. He told them they were summoned to welcome Gunther and his bride, and he commanded them to prepare sacrifices on the altars : a bull to Wotan, a boar to Froh, a he-goat to Donner, and a sheep to Fricka, so that she might smile on Gunther's union with Brünnhilde. Hagen was in such high spirits that the vassals were delighted, for commonly he hated joy and merriment, and they had never seen him smile or laugh before. But as Brünnhilde's approach was signalled he came down among them and said more gravely :

Be loyal to your new mistress and give her true help ; and if she suffers any wrong, be quick to avenge it ! ”

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The boat arrived at the river bank and, amid the loud clashing of weapons and shouts of welcome, Gunther conducted Brünnhilde, who was pale and dejected, towards the hall. Gutrune and Siegfried came out to meet them, and as Brünnhilde raised her eyes and saw Siegfried she was for a moment paralysed with amazement. As she saw no recognition in his eyes her amazement gradually gave way to horror, and then to anger. Siegfried, going forward, asked her what was the matter, and presented Gutrune to her as his bride. Under the cruel shock of this announcement she was almost fainting, and Siegfried, who was nearest, went forward to support her. She saw the Ring on his finger, and cried out with sudden impetuosity, "Ah, that ring on Siegfried's hand!"

Hagen stepped up from the background. "Let us listen carefully to the woman's complaint," he said.

Then Brünnhilde, who was making a great effort to command herself, asked how it was that the Ring which Gunther had taken from her the night before as a pledge of their union was on Siegfried's hand. But Gunther had no reply to make, and Siegfried could only remember that he had won the Ring from the dragon in the cave

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of Envy. But Hagen now joined in and accused Siegfried of treachery to Gunther, and said that he ought to be made to pay for it with his life. And while Siegfried and Gunther and Hagen were arguing about the point of honour, and Gutrune listening in wonder, poor Brünnhilde was overwhelmed with a terrible rush of shame and indignation at the incredible change which seemed to have come over Siegfried.

Siegfried swore that he was innocent; let Hagen strike him with his spear, and if it had power to wound him, then he was guilty. As he swore his oath Brünnhilde came forward, and with blazing eyes confirmed the oath, calling on the blade of the spear to avenge his insult to her honour. There was a great commotion among the vassals, in the midst of which Siegfried led Gutrune away, saying that Brünnhilde was probably upset by her sudden wooing, and that time and rest would cure her suspicions. Perhaps the Tarnhelm had been clumsily worn and had only half concealed him; in any case, he said, Brünnhilde would live to thank him for his services. And summoning the men and women to the marriage feast he led his bride into the hall.

Brünnhilde was now left with Gunther and

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Hagen; she was almost beside herself with anguish and amazement, and she wildly asked who would help her to avenge her honour. This was Hagen's chance; he would help her, and with his spear he would strike Siegfried if Brünnhilde would only tell him some cunning trick that would make Siegfried fall a prey to his weapon. Brünnhilde bitterly described how in their hours of love she had rendered him invulnerable; and then in a flash she remembered how, in the certainty that the hero would never turn his back on a foe, she had neglected to apply her enchantment to his back; if anyone were to strike him between the shoulder-blades he could be pierced there. "And there he shall be wounded!" cried Hagen.

Gunther felt miserable that his blood-brotherhood with Siegfried should be dishonoured in this way, but Hagen and Brünnhilde worked upon his jealousy and reminded him that Siegfried was his betrayer; nothing but Siegfried's death could avenge that. And then, as Brünnhilde's wild thoughts lit upon Gutrune, she began to suspect her of having thrown a spell upon Siegfried and she called a curse upon Gutrune. Hagen planned that they should make a hunting expedition the next day and that Gutrune should be

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told that Siegfried, straying from the others, had been wounded by a boar. And as Gunther and Brünnhilde joined their voices in a passionate denunciation of the traitor, Hagen hugged himself with delight at the thought of what he had accomplished. Siegfried should die; the treasure would be his; Alberic and he would once more rule powerfully over the Niebelungs, and wield the authority of the Ring.

As Gunther and Brünnhilde turned towards the hall Siegfried and Gutrune, crowned with marriage wreaths and flowers, came out to meet them.

III

A little distance away from Gunther's hall the Rhine passed through a rocky valley where the pine woods grew down to the water's edge. In the heat of the afternoon the three Rhine maidens were swimming and plunging amid the clear waves, lamenting the loss of the gold in their songs, and all the while swimming about in circles as though they were in a dance.

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They had a new song now—a song of sadness:

*Sun lady,
Send the light of summer!
Darkness lies on the deep:
Once it was bright
When brave and bold
Our Father's gold was its beacon.
Rhinegold! Shining gold!
How bright were then thy splendours,
Brave thy star in the deep!*

*Sun lady,
Send us him, the hero,
To give us the gold again!
Were it but won
Thy burning brow
We should grudge not now for its glory.
Rhinegold! Shining gold!
How fair were then thy splendours,
Free thy star in the deep!*

As they were singing they heard the sound of a horn, and Siegfried, in full armour, came out of the wood and stood on the bank at the edge of the water. He had been tempted to stray out of the track and had lost the rest of the hunting party. When the Rhine maidens saw that it was Siegfried they came up to the surface and began to tease him, asking how it was that he had lost his way, and promising him that if he would only give them back their Ring they would tell him all he wanted. As they swam and splashed and

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dived and sported in the river waves they made fun of him, calling him mean and close-fisted, because he said that he would not think of giving up to them what had cost him so much to win. And when they had laughed at him enough they dived away out of sight.

Siegfried came down nearer to the river, teased and annoyed in spite of his anxiety, and he called to them that if they would come to the shore perhaps he might give them the Ring. But the three maidens rose up again and spoke more gravely. He must take care of the Ring, they told him, until its unfortunate riddle had been solved; he would be glad enough then to be free of its curse. So Siegfried put back the Ring on his finger, and asked them to tell him what they knew.

"Ah, Siegfried!" they sang, "we have bad news for you. It is only for your own undoing that you keep the Ring." And they told him that as the dragon had fallen so should he fall himself, and that very day, unless he restored the Ring to them. But Siegfried replied that neither their allurements nor their threats had any power over him; and although they told him that the Norns had woven his fate in the cord of Destiny, he said that his sword, that had once splintered

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Wotan's spear, could easily cut the fateful cord of the Norns. They might have the Ring for love if they liked; but fear would not induce him to give it up.

And so the maidens, swimming away and singing, bade him farewell, telling him that a noble woman would to-day inherit what was his, and that she would obey them better. Down they dived again, and Siegfried looked after them smiling, and reflecting that when women could not get what they wanted by persuasion they easily turned to threats.

But now he heard the welcome sound of horns, and Gunther and Hagen, followed by their company, came out of the wood to the bank above Siegfried. He called to them to come down to the river bank, where it was cooler; and they joined him there and lay down to rest, while the servants brought out wine skins and began to prepare a meal. Siegfried told Gunther of his meeting with the Rhine maidens and of their strange predictions of his death; a thing which made Gunther very uneasy, but did not seem to trouble Hagen, who asked Siegfried if it was true that he knew what the birds said.

"Oh!" laughed Siegfried, "I have put all that out of my head for a long while. Since I

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have heard the singing of women I have quite forgotten the little bird." But as Gunther seemed gloomy, Siegfried said he would try to remember something about his adventures. He told them about Mimi and the smithy in the forest, of his fight with Fafner, and of the advice which the singing bird gave to him. Hagen now mingled an antidote in the mead that Siegfried was drinking, which restored his lost memory; and he related, to Gunther's amazement, the story of his search for Brünnhilde and the exquisite reward that he had gained in her love.

Just then two black ravens flew out of the thicket, circled round Siegfried and flew away again over the river. Siegfried turned to look after them; Hagen jumped up, and with one blow thrust his spear deep into Siegfried's back. Gunther was too late to prevent him, although he threw himself between them. Siegfried turned to swing his shield aloft as though to crush Hagen with it; but suddenly he reeled, his strength left him, and he sank back on the ground.

Hagen shouted, "Treachery is avenged!" and walked coolly away into the forest, while Gunther and his men, in great distress, bent over the fallen

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hero. The sun had set and dusk was beginning to fall ; and as Siegfried lay breathing out his life he murmured dreamily to Brünnhilde, "Wake, Brünnhilde, my heavenly bride ! Open your eyes !" He thought that he saw her cast once more into a deep sleep ; once more he was gazing on her, once more awakening her with a kiss ; once more he felt the delicious softness of the breath from her parted lips. "I come to you, Brünnhilde——" He sank back dead.

The vassals, in the greatest consternation, raised his body on the shield and slowly bore him up the rocky path by the river in a mournful procession. Gunther followed at a little distance, a prey to the deepest grief. And as the sad company wound their way among the rocks, the moon rose in the cloudy sky, and mists floated up from the river.

Meanwhile in the hall of the Gibichungs Gut-rune was awaiting the return of her bridegroom. She had been awakened from sleep and thought she heard the laughter of Brünnhilde ; but when she looked into Brünnhilde's room it was empty, and she was about to return to her own chamber when she heard the voice of Hagen calling for

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torches and firebrands to greet the returning hero. As his voice echoed through the hall it aroused the sleeping men and women, who, bearing torches, went out to meet the procession that was bringing in Siegfried's body; while Hagen brutally told Gutrune that Siegfried had been killed by a boar.

The body was brought in; Gutrune threw herself in consternation beside it, while Gunther bent over her and tried to comfort her. She thrust him away, accusing him of treachery; but Hagen stepped forward and boldly announced that it was he who had killed Siegfried, and he demanded the Ring as his right. Gunther swore he should never have it; and Hagen, quickly drawing his sword, rushed upon Gunther and thrust him through. Then turning to Siegfried's body he snatched at his hand, saying, "Now for the Ring!"

But to his horror, and the horror of everyone who stood by, the dead hand raised itself up in a threatening attitude. While it was still extended Brünnhilde came quietly forward, calling for silence. It was her right, she said, to avenge the hero, the calamity of whose death none of them could ever understand; and even when Gutrune turned to Brünnhilde and desperately accused her

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of having betrayed Siegfried, Brünnhilde's dignity and solemn emotion silenced her. Turning to the people who were crowded in the hall, Brünnhilde commanded them to bring faggots and build a funeral pyre, and then to bring Siegfried's horse for her to mount, so that she might take part in the funeral honours.

The vassals collected wood and built it into a pyre; the women draped it and strewed flowers and herbs upon it, and all the while Brünnhilde stood gazing into her dead lover's face, wondering passionately by what law it was that he, who had been so pure and loyal, could have ever proved a traitor to her. She heard the rustling wings of Wotan's ravens in the air; surely the greatest of all evils had been accomplished now and they might announce to Wotan the consummation of the gods' fate!

When the pyre was ready Brünnhilde signed to the men to take up Siegfried's body and lay it there; and then she took the Ring from his finger and placed it on her own hand. "Now I take my inheritance for my own," she said. "Oh, fatal Ring, terrible Ring, I take you in my hand so that I may cast you away! Wise sisters of the waters, laughing daughters of the Rhine, I thank you for your counsel, I give you back

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what belongs to you. Take it for yourselves from my ashes ! The flame that burns me shall purge the Ring from its curse ; the curse will be washed away in the river, and you shall keep the bright gold, the shining star of the Rhine that was so fatefully stolen from you ! ”

She took a firebrand from one of the vassals and thrust it into the pile of wood, which quickly burst into flames. The two ravens flew up from the rocks and disappeared into the dark sky. Mounting the horse Grane, Brünnhilde rode straight on to the pyre, calling to Siegfried in loving greeting. As she touched the pyre the flames rose up into a blinding mass and filled the space before the hall, and even seized on the building itself. When the fire had reached its greatest height, consuming the pyre and the hall, and had hidden everything from view, it sank down again, leaving only a dense column of smoke like a bank of clouds.

The Rhine began to rise, and, creeping up towards the hall, flooded the space about the ruins ; and the three Rhine maidens could be seen swimming close to the embers of the pyre. At that moment Hagen, who had been stupefied by all that he had seen, rushed madly into the flood crying “ Keep away from the Ring ! ” But

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two of the Rhine maidens twined him in their arms and drew him down into the water, while the third joyfully caught the Ring in her hand, and restored it to the river depths.

The Rhine shrank back again into its channel, but the sky glowed with an increasing conflagration; and in the midst of it could be seen Valhalla ablaze, with Wotan and the gods sitting there and perishing in the fire.

And when the flames died down night had fallen for ever upon the gods.

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I

ONCE, when love and faith were in danger of withering and perishing in the world of men, a host of angels bore down from heaven the sacred vessel of the Grail, from which faith and love might be eternally strengthened and renewed. This crystal cup was that from which the Saviour drank at his last feast of love and brotherhood, and in which his blood was received when he was wounded on the Cross.

This cup of the Grail, with the sacred spear that had been thrust into the Saviour's side, was guarded by the pious knight Titurel in the castle of Montsalvat. There he gathered about him a company of knights for the service and protection of the sacred emblems. None but those of perfect purity in heart and life were admitted to the service of the Grail; and in the temple of Montsalvat they received from it such spiritual strength and sustenance as enabled them to uphold in the world the banner of Christian faith and love, and inspired them to holy and heroic

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achievement in the Divine Cause. Peace and kindness reigned in the domains of Montsalvat, where even the wild animals roamed unharmed in the sunny glades and the birds sang unfrightened in the thickets.

In this forest domain, when the early sun of a summer morning was throwing long shadows on the dewy grass, reveille sounded solemnly from the castle, and awakened Gurnemanz, the old but hardy armourer of King Amfortas, who had been sleeping on the soft turf under a tree. He roused his two esquires and ordered them to prepare the morning bath for the King, who was carried every morning in a litter to bathe in the forest lake. Even while Gurnemanz was speaking two knights came from the castle and heralded the approach of the King; and in answer to the old man's questions they told him that the wound from which Amfortas was suffering still resisted all the arts of the physicians and caused him daily more and more anguish. They were speaking to Gurnemanz of the herbs which had been used to cure it when they suddenly saw in the distance the apparition of a woman riding wildly towards them; they recognised her as Kundry, a witch or sorceress who lived in the enchanted ground beyond the castle domains. She was

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dressed in strange dishevelled garments fastened with a girdle of snake skins; her black hair streamed about her shoulders, her black eyes flashed with excitement. She staggered up to Gurnemanz and gave him a small crystal flask. "Take it," she panted, "it is a balsam; it has come from farther away than you think, and if it fails to cure him nothing else can." And in complete exhaustion she flung herself on the ground under a tree.

At that moment the arrival of the King's litter attracted Gurnemanz's attention; it was brought into the middle of the forest glade and set down, while the King, groaning with pain, raised himself and spoke of his night of agony and of his hope of refreshment from the water of the holy lake. He had no hope from any of the means that were being employed to cure him, and awaited the fulfilment of a mysterious promise that had been given him—a promise that assistance would come to him through "a Fool unstained" who had "grown wise through pity." And in his misery, he began to wonder whether this mysterious description was not simply another name for Death.

But Gurnemanz now handed him Kundry's flask and begged him to try the balsam in it.

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He promised to try it when he heard that it had come from far Arabia, if only out of gratitude to this wild and scared-looking woman who had brought it so far ; but Kundry would not receive any thanks, and begged him to make haste to the bath.

Then Amfortas was carried down to the lake, and Gurnemanz and his esquires remained looking at Kundry, who still lay on the ground like an animal. One of the esquires spoke of her as a dangerous person, who might kill Amfortas with some magic drug ; but Gurnemanz rebuked him, asking him what harm she had done, and reminded him that this same Kundry never asked them for anything, never received food or shelter from them, but nevertheless, when the knights of the Grail were fighting in distant lands, had proved a faithful messenger, flying to them with magic swiftness and bringing back news of them.

“Look how she glares at us—how she hates us !” said one of the esquires ; and another said that she was a sorceress and a pagan.

“No doubt she is bewitched,” said Gurnemanz, “and is expiating in her present form the evil done in a past life. But she is a friend to the Grail and serves us faithfully.” And he

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remembered that whenever she had been absent for a long time there had always been trouble. He had known her all his life, and Titurel, the father of Amfortas, had known her before that; he had found her asleep in a thicket when he had built the castle of the Grail. And then, as though something new had come into Gurnemanz's mind, he said to Kundry, "Where were you when Amfortas lost the sacred lance?" She did not answer, and he spoke of his remembrance of that dreadful misfortune. Amfortas, the son of Titurel, had taken over the lordship of the Grail when his father had grown too old; he had been a noble and pure knight until one dreadful day when they had found him bewitched beneath the castle walls, lying entranced in the arms of a woman of terrible beauty; the sacred spear had dropped from his hand, and had been seized by Klingsor and carried off; and Amfortas was left with a burning wound in his side which no balm could heal.

"Klingsor ——" said the knights. "Tell us about him."

Then Gurnemanz told them how, when the castle of the Grail was built and the knighthood established by Titurel, the magician Klingsor had begged to be enrolled in the brotherhood, but had

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been refused because of his unholy life. In his rage and mortification he had used his magic arts to turn the desert beyond the domains of the Grail into a wonderful garden of pleasure, full of beautiful flowers and peopled by women of an enchanting beauty, who lay in wait for the knights of the Grail and tried to seduce them from their pious vows. Many had resisted these lures of Klingsor, but some had fallen; and when King Titurel had grown very old and passed the lordship of the Grail on to his son, Amfortas was determined to make a raid on the garden and destroy its magic spell. It was while he was making that attempt that he had himself fallen a victim, and had the sacred spear stolen from him by Klingsor, who wished to use its power to secure the Grail for himself. And Gurnemanz went on to tell them how Amfortas, kneeling in impassioned prayer before the Grail, had craved some sign of redemption and forgiveness; and how a light had suddenly shone from the holy vessel and he had heard a voice speaking the mystic words:

*Grown wise through pity,
The Fool unstained :
Him await
Whom I ordained.*

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The esquires repeated with awe the mysterious words, but they were interrupted by shouts from the lake, and starting up they saw a wild swan fluttering downwards to the ground; when it sank there they saw that in its breast there was fixed an arrow, which one of the knights drew out. Another of the knights, who had come up from the lake after it, told them how it had been flying about Amfortas, like a good omen, when an arrow struck it.

At this moment some other knights from the lake arrived leading a youth with an open ingenuous countenance; he had a bow in his hand and they asked him if he were not the culprit. "Yes, surely," he answered; "I hit everything that flies!"

But to the boy's surprise Gurnemanz spoke to him with anger and emotion, asking him how he could dare to desecrate the peace of the forest, where everything living was sacred, and where death and fear were unknown. What harm had the bird done to the youth that he should kill it? It had been dear to them, and now with its blood not yet cold it lay there stained with death and pain.

The boy was so moved by Gurnemanz's indignation that he snapped his bow into pieces

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and threw it away. He looked bewildered, and when they asked him questions about where he had come from, who his father was, and so on, he answered every time, "I do not know." Gurnemanz, who thought that he must be half-witted, bade the esquires take away the dead swan on a bier of green branches, and go back to the King ; and when they had all gone he turned again to the boy, saying, "Now tell me what you *do* know ; surely you must have knowledge of something."

"I have a mother," said the boy ; "her name is Heart's Affliction. We lived in the forest and moorlands, and I made my bow for myself to drive the wild eagles from the forest." And Gurnemanz was continuing to question the boy when Kundry, who was still crouching under the tree and had shown signs of agitation since the boy had appeared, now cried out harshly : "He had no father when he was born ; Gamuret, his father, was killed in battle, and for fear her son should come to the same fate, his mother brought him up like a fool in the desert." And she laughed bitterly.

Her words reminded the boy that once he had tried to follow some brilliantly armed knights whom he had seen passing by, and having lost

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his way he had been obliged to defend himself against wild animals and men, although he had no knowledge of evil or good with regard to them. When Gurnemanz tried to recall his attention to his mother, Kundry told them mockingly that she was dead; and the way she imparted this tragic news so infuriated the boy that he sprang upon her and would have strangled her but for the intervention of Gurnemanz. The strange boy fell into a trembling fit in terror of what he had done, and it was Kundry herself who revived him by bringing water from a neighbouring spring. Gurnemanz praised her for her kindness, but she rejected his praise; she dragged herself towards the thicket, saying, "I never do good; it is rest that I long for. I am weary. Oh that I may sleep and never be awakened!" Kundry felt herself being folded in the deep sleep into which Klingsor by his magic powers was wont to cast her when he wished to make use of her in some of his evil enchantments; and although she trembled and resisted it was of no use. "The time is come," she said. "I must sleep!" And she sank down behind the thicket and disappeared from view.

In the meantime the knights and esquires began to return from the lake, going before Am-

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fortas, who was coming back from his bath. Gurnemanz turned to the boy and told him that he would take him to the Holy Feast of the Grail, for that if he were pure in heart the Grail would refresh him.

"Who is the Grail?" asked the boy. "I must not tell you," answered Gurnemanz. "If you should be chosen for its service everything will be revealed to you." And putting his arm round the boy's neck he led him through mystic ways and hidden paths, through the world of Space and Time to the sacred castle of the Grail. A great booming of deep bells was in their ears; it increased and grew louder and nearer, and wove itself into deep harmonics and overtones that filled the air with humming sound. They came out of a long vaulted passage into a great and beautiful hall surmounted by a high dome; this was the refectory of the knights of the Grail.

The boy stood spellbound at the beauty of the hall and at the chiming music which he heard from the dome. Gurnemanz turned to him and said, "Now pay careful attention, and if you are really a fool and unstained, let me see what knowledge and wisdom you can learn." Doors opened into the hall, and a long procession of knights of the Grail entered and ranged them-

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selves round tables on which cups were set in readiness for the Holy Feast. They sang as they walked solemnly in and took their places ; and during their singing Amfortas was carried in on his litter with a procession of esquires and other members of the brotherhood. Before him four esquires carried the sacred shrine, which was placed, still uncovered, on a stone altar beneath the dome. And as Amfortas was borne in a choir of young men was heard singing from the middle height of the dome.

*For sinful and lowly
In pain and sadness
As once Thy Blood was offered,
Redeemer most holy,
To Thee in rapture and gladness
My blood be proffered.
The Body Thine Atonement gives,
For us, in us through death it lives.*

As this chorus died away it was answered by another, formed entirely of boys' voices, which sounded from the extreme height of the dome.

*Faith dwells above :
Behold the dove
The Saviour's message bearing ;
His Wine is shed,
His living Bread
Is granted for your sharing.*

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By this time all the knights had taken their places at the tables; and amidst a deep silence a hollow voice was heard from a vaulted niche beneath the altar, saying, "My son Amfortas, are you at your post?" There was no answer; and the voice spoke again. "Shall I once more to-day look on the Grail and live?" Still no answer, and the voice spoke again. "Must I go forth without my Saviour to guide me?"

This time there was an answer. Amfortas, raising himself and speaking in a voice of agony, said, "Alas! alas! for my pain! Father, once more perform the office; live, and let me perish!" For the voice from under the altar was the voice of Titurel, who, although grown old and feeble, was not permitted to die in the holy presence of the Grail but remained there in a sort of trance, living only to take part in the celebration of the mystery. His voice was again heard calling on Amfortas to unveil the Grail, but the wounded man, holding back the servers who would have withdrawn the veil, begged once more that it should not be uncovered.

"Oh, leave it unrevealed," he prayed; "and may no one know the anguish that is awakened in me by the vision that so enraptures you! What is the wound or the torture of its pain,

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compared with the hellish torment of being forced to perform this office?" And he spoke of the terrible punishment that had fallen upon him who, although he had outraged the Grail by his sin, was still condemned to be its minister and appear in its outraged presence. And though he approached it in deepest penitence, yet the moment that the veil fell and the blood in the chalice glowed with Divine radiance, and the quickening fountain of life flowed into his heart, at that very moment his own sinful blood quickened also into life and poured itself out once more from his wound. "Have mercy, thou All-merciful One!" he cried. "Save me from my inheritance! Close my wound and let me die, once more pure and holy in thy sight!"

As he fell back as though unconscious, the boys' voices from the height of the dome floated down again.

*Grown wise through pity,
The fool unstained:
Him await
Whom I ordained.*

Then the voice of Titurel was heard once more saying, "Uncover the Grail!" and as Amfortas painfully raised himself again the servers stepped forward, drew the veil from the golden shrine,

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brought forth the cup of pure crystal, and set it before him. Darkness gathered in the hall, and the boys' voices were again heard from the height.

*Take and eat My Body,
Take and drink My Blood,
Because of our Love. .*

*Take and drink My Blood,
Take and eat My Body,
In remembrance of Me.*

As they sang these words a blinding ray of light fell from above on the crystal cup in which the blood began to glow, shedding a mild radiance throughout the building. Amfortas, whose face was exalted and transfigured, raised the cup on high, waving it gently about him, and then blessed the bread and wine. The knights sank on their knees and looked reverently on the holy vessel, while Titurel's voice was heard saluting the Grail from his niche as he joined in the celebration. As Amfortas set down the Grail again the radiance died away from it and the light of day flowed gradually back into the hall. The bread and wine were distributed by servers to the knights sitting at the tables; Gurnemanz joined them, beckoning to the foolish youth to take a seat by his side;

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but the boy remained standing rigid and silent, as though he were in a trance.

While the Love Feast was being celebrated the solemn music continued. From the height of the dome the voices of the boys were heard first.

*Bread and wine in symbol strangest,
Master of the Grail, Thou changest
For Thy love and pity's sake
To the Blood Thy passion shed,
To the Flesh Thy passion brake.*

The boys' voices were answered from the middle height of the dome by the choir of young men stationed there.

*Flesh and Blood, the food of Heaven,
Now in mystic rite is given,
Comfort for your sorrow's need,
In the Wine and in the Bread
Where to-day His servants feed.*

Then the knights on one side of the table took up the ritual, singing :—

*Take, eat the Bread,
For strengthening food,
For might of hands untiring:
Till life be sped,
Through ill and good,
To do the Lord's desiring.*

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And the other knights answered :

*Take, drink the Wine,
Its fire anew
Into your lifeblood turning,
In bond divine
As brothers true
To strive with valour burning.*

And then they all sang the words, *Blessed in Faith! Blessed in Love!*

Amfortas did not join in the celebration ; the exaltation had died away from his face ; he bowed his head in agony and pressed his hand on his wound, which had broken forth again. He was helped back to his litter, and carried away, the sacred shrine being borne before him, while the knights and esquires gradually left the hall in a solemn procession. The booming of the bells began again, increased ; but the boy still stood rigid as though what he had seen had cast a spell upon him. Only once, when Amfortas had cried out in his agony, the boy had made a convulsive movement as though he too suffered.

Gurnemanz, when the Feast was over, came up and shook him by the arm to rouse him, asking him if he understood what he had seen. But the boy only shook his head.

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“Then you are nothing but a fool after all !” said Gurnemanz angrily ; and opening a narrow door at the side of the hall he said, “Go out then, go your own way ! But if you take my advice you will leave our swans alone in future ; and since you are such a gander, go and find a goose for yourself !”

And he pushed the boy out and slammed the door, afterwards turning back, and taking his place in the solemn procession of knights that was leaving the hall.

II

Klingsor was seated in his magic tower surrounded by the implements of his baleful art. He was looking into a metal mirror in which he could see the events of the future ; and he saw the youth who had been so roughly thrust out of the Grail temple by Gurnemanz coming to the enchanted tower in obedience to the sorcerer's arts. Klingsor had already thrown Kundry into the deep sleep by which he prepared her to do his bidding ; and now kindling some of his drugs and producing a great cloud of violet light and vapour, he summoned her, calling her Devil and Rose of Hell.

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The violet vapour gradually took form—the form of a woman—and presently Kundry herself stood before him like one awaking from a deep sleep. Klingsor reminded her how she had served him in the past by seducing the knights of the Grail, although Kundry with choking cries of misery struggled against the remembrance. But Klingsor was merciless, and told her that to-day her seductive powers must be exercised upon the most difficult and dangerous of all victims—one who was protected by ignorance and innocence. When she still protested he reminded her that he had the power to force her to obey his will, since he alone of all men had killed within himself those desires and impulses which brought others into her power. He mocked at Kundry, asking her how Amfortas, her last bridegroom, had pleased her; but she only answered with a cry that was half a prayer for release from this terrible bondage.

“Whoever spurns you can set you free,” said Klingsor; “so try it with the boy who is coming now!” And looking out over the ramparts of his tower, he told Kundry that the youth was even now approaching. The spells of transformation were already at work on Kundry, and strange and diabolical laughter echoed from the

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tower ; it rose to an ecstasy and then ended with a shriek of agony as the violet light went out and she disappeared from Klingsor's presence. The magician could see the youth as he came near the castle being attacked by the company of knights who had been seduced by Klingsor from their service to the Grail ; and over them all the youth was victorious, seizing their arms from them and cutting them down in all directions.

So the sorcerer, having finished his work, prepared to change the scene ; his tower suddenly sank and vanished into the earth. In its place appeared a wonderful enchanted garden full of tropical flowers and luxuriant vegetation of every kind. Soft perfumed breezes were blowing there ; delicious vistas opened on every side, shady groves invited the languid to repose, and in the distance behind the garden there rose the terraces of a magnificent Arabian castle.

The foolish youth whom Gurnemanz had spurned, unconsciously obeying some impulse within him, had wandered from the castle of the Grail until he came to the walls of this garden, on which he now stood looking down in astonishment

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at the wonderful scene of beauty that lay before him. While he looked, a crowd of young girls came rushing from the palace and from the groves of the garden, all in a pretty disorder as though they had been awaked from sleep. When they saw the boy they hailed him with bitter reproaches as the conqueror of their companions, the knights ; but when he jumped down into the garden among them and they saw that he intended them no harm, they tried to allure him. He had never seen anything so beautiful before ; he soon made friends with them, and showed his willingness to join them in their play. In his innocence he was both shy and fearless, and the girls began to quarrel among themselves as to which of them should be his companion. One would stroke his cheek, another would kiss his mouth, another would claim all his caresses ; they vied with one another in making themselves beautiful for him, and dressed themselves up as different flowers of the most varied and brilliant hues ; but when they crowded too closely round him the boy pushed them gently away and said he must have more room. They were all playing and struggling together in a pretty quarrel when a voice was heard calling from a bower of flowers :

“ Parsifal ! ”

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At the sound of the voice the maidens stopped playing and looked frightened. At the sound of the name Parsifal started and stood spell-bound.

"Parsifal!" he repeated. "That was what my mother once called me when she was dreaming!"

The voice sounded nearer as the figure of a woman came into view behind the trees. "Stay here, Parsifal, and joy and good fortune shall be yours. Run away, you childish wantons; he was not made for your pleasure; run away and attend to your wounded knights."

The girls turned regretfully away, bewailing their lot at having to leave such an attractively foolish youth; and as Parsifal turned from looking after them he saw through the open branches of the bower a young and exquisitely beautiful woman lying on a couch of flowers. It was in this form, of a beauty so dazzling as to be beyond all description or comparison, that Kundry had appeared to enchant him.

In order to overcome his innocence and simplicity, Kundry played cunningly on the only form of love that was known to him—his love for his mother. She described him as he had lain as a little baby on his mother's breast and

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lisped and laughed in her ear ; her terrors when he had been lost, her joys and raptures when he had been found again ; and finally, when he had wandered away, her pain and sorrow that had ended only in her death. And when Kundry had played on his feelings to this extent, rousing anguish and grief in his heart, she called him to come and comfort himself with the sweet consolation which she could give him, and urged him to learn the love that had enveloped Gamuret his father when the passion of Heart's Affliction had first inflamed him. And drawing Parsifal down to her she spoke of the last gift his mother could give to him, and pressed on his lips a kiss of love.

But Parsifal started up with a gesture of terror, pressing his hand on his heart as though he were in mortal pain. "Amfortas, Amfortas ! The wound !" he cried. "It is burning my heart. Oh misery ! misery ! The wound that I saw bleeding in him now bleeds in me !" And he remembered the suffering of Amfortas, and the agony and humiliation that he endured because of his transgression. He remembered that strange Eucharist at Montsalvat whose power now worked in his innocent heart and mystically informed him of his own danger. The kiss of Kundry

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had kindled the awful flame of desire in his veins, but the power of the Grail had given him the power to resist it ; and with a cry of "Seductress ! away from me !" he spurned the astonished Kundry and sprang up indignant and defiant.

The baffled enchantress, beginning to understand that his innocence was too powerful for her, fell to begging and suing for his love, which would be salvation to herself. If he could only guess the curse, she said, which, asleep and awake, in death and in life, in grief and in joy, gnawed and tortured her ! If he would only be hers for a single hour, then although God and the world might cast her off, she would be redeemed by his purity.

"Sinful woman !" said Parsifal. "I offer even you redemption."

"Divine one," she answered, "let me love you and I should have redemption enough !"

"You shall have love and redemption both," said Parsifal, "if you will show me the way back to Amfortas."

But Kundry, at the sound of her victim's name, burst into terrible laughter. She tried to bribe him into her arms, promising that if he would be hers for one single hour she would take him to Amfortas ; but, if he still refused, she

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threatened him with the sacred spear whose wounds were so fatal. As she tried to embrace him he thrust her violently away; and with that her frenzy rose to an agonising height; she cried to Klingsor for help, and called down curses on the head of Parsifal.

At the sound of Kundry's voice Klingsor appeared on the battlements of the castle; and raising his arm he hurled the sacred spear at Parsifal's head. But a miracle happened. Instead of striking him the spear floated motionless in the air above his head. The youth grasped it and, calling upon it to break the spell of wickedness that surrounded him, he traced with it in the air the sign of the Cross.

At the sign the magic castle fell into ruins; a sudden blight as of winter spread over the garden; the flowers drooped and withered, the verdant pleasaunce became a desert waste, and Kundry fell to the earth with a cry.

As Parsifal went away he paused on the top of the ruined wall and turned to her, telling her that she knew the only place in which she could find him again—the place of mercy and repentance.

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III

Once more in the domain of Montsalvat Gurnemanz was waking to a new day. But it was a different part of the domain from that in which we first saw him; the landscape was open and varied, a stream murmured through the fields, and near it in a poor hut Gurnemanz, now grown very old and living the life of a hermit, bemoaned the evil days that had fallen on the Grail.

As the light of day increased Gurnemanz came out of his hut, attracted by a wailing sound that he heard in an adjoining thicket; and when he went to see where the noise came from he discovered Kundry, rigid and almost lifeless, as though she had been lying there through the winter and spring. The old man vigorously chafed her hands and did all he could to bring back life to her; and at last she awoke and, opening her eyes, uttered a low cry.

She was pale and wild and unkempt as ever, but there seemed to be a less defiant expression in her face and there was a look of spiritual suffering in her eyes that won the old man's sympathy. In answer to his questions she only uttered one word, "Service." But alas! there

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was no more service for her to perform, for her old offices to the Grail brotherhood had been given to others. Still, when she had struggled to her feet she instinctively resumed her old habits, and taking a pitcher went to the well to draw water.

At this moment Gurnemanz saw someone coming from another direction towards the well — a knight in black armour whose face was covered by his closed vizor. Gurnemanz greeted him, but received no reply; and then the old man told the stranger that it was not fitting that he should wear armour in the Grail domains, especially on this sacred day of Good Friday. But although the knight shook his head, as though he had not even known what day it was, Gurnemanz would not permit of anything approaching sacrilege. “Come,” he said, “off with your armour! Do not on this morning offend the Lord, who once made himself defenceless that he might bleed for our salvation.”

The knight then rose and thrust his lance into the ground beside him, put his sword and shield with it, and took off his armour, thereafter kneeling down in prayer beside the lance. As he took off his helmet Gurnemanz recognised the features of Parsifal, and he beckoned Kundry to him,

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who also gazed in astonishment at the familiar face. And then, as Gurnemanz recognised the lance, he exclaimed in a voice trembling with the deepest emotion, "Oh, holiest day on which I have ever waked !"

When he asked Parsifal whence he had come and whom he was seeking, the knightly youth told him of his adventure, and of how he had tried earnestly to find the hidden path that led back to the temple of the Grail, but until that morning had only wandered in the desert. Gurnemanz told him that Titurel was dead, and was on that very day to be buried ; that Amfortas had promised once more to perform his office and unveil the shrine, but that afterwards he could no longer take part in the mystery. And while Gurnemanz was speaking Kundry, who had brought water, had been washing Parsifal's feet and drying them with her hair ; for Gurnemanz had whispered to her that Parsifal had evidently been preserved for the accomplishment of a high office, and that they must prepare him and make him free from all stain to fulfil it on that day.

And in the golden meadows there by the stream Gurnemanz baptised him, pronounced him pure as the pure spring water, and anointed his head with a flask of precious balm that Kundry had

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kept hidden in her dress. And after that, while Gurnemanz was for a moment occupied with other things, Parsifal, whose heart was filled with pity, took water from the spring into his hands, bent down over Kundry and sprinkled it on her head. "Thus I fulfil my first duty," he said; "receive your baptism, and believe in the Redcemer." And Kundry bent her head and wept bitterly.

Parsifal turned away and looked on the green and gold of the spring landscape with solemn delight. "How beautiful it is!" he said. "Once I discovered magic flowers that climbed up to my head and sought to embrace me, but I have never seen grass or flowers that bloomed so deliciously or smelled so sweetly or spoke to me of such loving trust!"

"It is the magic of Good Friday," said Gurnemanz simply. And he told Parsifal that Good Friday could never be a gloomy day among created things, since they could no longer see the Cross and the Agony, but only the face of redeemed man, whose tears of joy thus refreshed the earth with a divine dew.

They looked for a little while on the delicious scene, their hearts brimming with peace and happiness; and then the first booming of the

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bells from Montsalvat reminded Gurnemanz that the midday hour had come and that they must proceed to the temple. Once more, while the music of the great bells increased, he led the way through the magic paths of Space and Time, through the portal in the rocks and up the long vaulted passage that opened into the hall of Montsalvat. As they entered, two processions were coming into the hall from opposite sides, one carrying the litter of Amfortas and the other the coffin of Titurel on a bier. The coffin was placed on a catafalque behind the altar of the Grail, and the knights turned to Amfortas, summoning him for the last time to perform the holy office. The coffin was uncovered; Amfortas saluted his father with a prayer that he would intercede for him with the Redeemer, who alone could release him from his pain; but when the knights once more called on him to unveil the holy vessel he leapt up in an agony of despair, crying "Never again! never again! Death darkens about me and I will not force myself back to life again!" He tore open his garments and showed the open wound, crying to the knights to draw their swords and thrust deep into it, so that the tortured sinner might find peace in death.

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But the knights shrank back in horror, and Amfortas was left for a moment standing alone in his terrible ecstasy. Then Parsifal stepped forward and stretched forth his lance and touched the wound. "Only one weapon can help you," he said; "only that spear which opened the wound can avail to close it. Be whole, be made pure, be redeemed! I will now perform your office, for holy is the suffering which gave to a timid Fool the greatest strength of pity, and the might of purest knowledge! See, I bring back to you the holy Lance!"

He had raised the lance above his head, and all gazed enraptured at it, while the face of Amfortas, freed from the torture that had disfigured it before, was now transfigured with a glowing ecstasy.

Parsifal called on the servers to unveil the Grail. As they opened it he went to the steps of the altar, took the vessel from its shrine, and fell on his knees in deep prayer, while the soft ruby light gradually glowed and mantled in the cup and the chorus of voices sounded from the height: "*Oh miracle of salvation, Redemption to the Redeemer!*"

The Grail glowed with a deeper and deeper light, while a white dove fluttered down from the

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dome and hovered over Parsifal's head. Kundry with her eyes fixed on him sank to the ground at his feet, dead. And the rest of the knights knelt humbly, while Parsifal held the Grail over them in benediction.

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THE dramatic poems which have in these pages been paraphrased in narrative prose were all written by Richard Wagner as poems for music; that is to say, he did not conceive them as separate compositions, but each one represented a third of that triple association of poetry, music, and stage effect which he regarded as the highest expression of modern art.

The poems were nearly all derived primarily from legends or sagas of the North, but were in every case freely adapted by Wagner to his own purposes. The legend of "The Flying Dutchman" is in some form or other the property of all sea-going nations; Wagner followed pretty faithfully the version of it presented in Heine's poem. The legend of "Tannhäuser and the Hill of Venus" is a familiar German myth, while the legend of "Lohengrin," which has less of myth and more of Wagner's own invention in it than any other of the earlier works, was first discovered by him in the works of Chrestien de Troyes. In "Tristan and Isolde" he took

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one of the many versions of the story of Tristram and Iseult, and, as usual, modified it in accordance with his own admirable sense of dramatic form. "The Ring of the Niebelungs" is based on the *Niebelungen Noth* and the Edda; as Wagner developed it he altered it so much that, with the exception of the characters, it may be regarded as almost original. In a similar way "Parsifal," although it is derived from Wolfram von Eschenbach's version of the Grail story, was freely adapted by Wagner to serve the peculiar purposes of a method of stage representation which by that time he had fully evolved.

Probably two of the most interesting stories, from the point of view of pure drama, are those of "Tannhäuser" and "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg." In both of them picturesque use is made of the ancient singing contests held in Germany. The full title of "Tannhäuser" is *Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg* (Tannhäuser and the Singers' Contest on the Wartburg); and the central scene represents with fair historical accuracy one of the contests held between the Minnesingers, or Love Bards, who flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and who were wont to improvise songs in praise of Love, to the accompaniment of harps. These

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Minnesingers were succeeded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the Singing Guilds of tradesmen in German towns, who formulated very elaborate rules for the government of their contests, and whose doings are so genially portrayed in "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg."

The poem of this opera was originally written by Wagner as a kind of comic pendant to "Tannhäuser"; but when he took it up to compose the music sixteen years later he entirely altered it by making the true spiritual hero of the drama Hans Sachs, whose tender nobility of character, only suggested in the words, is so plainly revealed by the music, and gives the opera its entirely unique character among dramatic compositions. The story of "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg" was entirely of Wagner's own invention, except that Hans Sachs, the cobbler poet, was of course a historical character; his hymn *Wach' auf!* is introduced into the poem. Wagner derived his information about Nuremberg chiefly from a document published at Altdorf in 1697 by Christopher Wagenseil; from which document the names of the Mastersingers, Pagner, Vogelgesang, and the rest of them, are actually taken.

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It would be unfair to examine the literary merit of these poems too closely; for, in spite of Wagner's theories, they are meant to serve simply as vehicles for musical utterance. From that point of view by far the most successful of them is "Tristan and Isolde"; in it the words are in no sense narrative, but consist almost entirely of emotional utterance and exclamation, such as naturally calls for music to assist in its expression. In "The Ring of the Niebelung" Wagner adopted the Saga verses as the pattern of his poem; and that also, with its curious plan of alliteration and its employment of archaic German, made a singularly useful material for setting to music.

There is a great deal of verbal wit and cleverness in the poem of the "The Mastersingers," but it consists largely in puns and plays upon words, and is difficult to preserve in a translation. Perhaps the highest praise that can be given to this drama on the literary side is that, although it is often intentionally ridiculous and farcical, it is full of tenderness and true humour, and its broad, genial grasp of life conforms to the spirit of true comedy. As poetry pure and simple, "The Flying Dutchman," which with the exception of his three or four 'prentice works, was the first

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expression of Wagner's artistic genius, is from a literary point of view probably the best.

With the exception of "Parsifal," which stands entirely by itself, Richard Wagner's works naturally group themselves into three divisions. "The Flying Dutchman," "Tannhäuser," and "Lohengrin" represent his treatment of the old opera form, with its conventionalities and formalities. "Tristan and Isolde" and "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg" represent the new thing which Wagner made out of the old opera; they are music plays from which formality and convention are as far as possible banished, in which true dramatic art is wedded to music of a spontaneous flowing kind such as exists in no other works in the world. "The Ring," on the other hand, is a vast epic of sound requiring four long dramas for its development, and dealing not with human emotions, but with primæval forces which are embodied in gods, semi-gods, giants, and heroes. "Parsifal" is a mystic drama in which religion, poetry, music, and a nebulous ethereal philosophy are blended into one of the most remarkable fabrics of art that has ever been designed.

Which of these is Wagner's masterpiece? In

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which does his peculiar genius most freely manifest itself? In which does he carry his unique art the farthest? Above all, which has added most to the joy and beauty of the world? These are difficult and in some ways absurd questions, but they cannot fail to be discussed among those who love the subject.

Is "Tannhäuser the masterpiece?" Of course it is not; in the simplicity and comparative conventionality of that opera, Wagner's art was less than anywhere else preoccupied with progressive theories; it had formally most in common with the theatre and the opera as they existed, not in imagination and theory, but in fact and practice; yet the beauty of the music is so supreme that it crowns Tannhäuser as king among conventional operas. Is it the "Ring," with its tremendous statuary of gods and heroes, its immense and elaborate structure, its superstructure of national and theatrical Utopianism, its foundation of socialistic ideas? Is it "Tristan," in which the complex expression of the most poignant of human emotions is wrought and wrought again by the hand of a master-craftsman until the very blood of life seems to pass into it? Or is it "The Mastersingers," where Wagner forsakes his worlds of mythology, banishes his types and abstractions,

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and creates from the world of men a human drama; wherein he builds firmly on a broad and noble foundation, and raises upon it such a structure as may serve mankind as a vantage point for a wise and kindly view of life? Or is it "Parsifal," the work of his splendid decadence, in which the mists of evening rise about his philosophy, in which a tender mysticism envelops his thoughts on human destiny, and in which the emotion of pity is dramatised and ennobled with a Greek intensity, but in a manner that is altogether modern?

All these are works of transcendent power and beauty; and if a ballot were taken among the devotees of Wagner the lots would no doubt fall pretty evenly between "Tristan" and "Parsifal," these two being the works in which Wagner's unique powers of carrying the expression of human emotion to the most acute limits, and of hypnotising his audience by means of a kind of tonal sorcery, are most favourably exhibited. The "Ring," grand as it is, must be dismissed on the ground that it is not in itself a perfectly achieved thing. It is a magnificent attempt at the impossible, a giant's labour at a task which was beyond the power even of an artist and dramatist like Wagner; but the fact that it

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is full of beautiful and perfect things does not make it in itself a beautiful and perfect thing, nor save it from the reproach of being in many places undramatic—a crude mass of which the component parts are not always perfectly welded together. “Tannhäuser” will probably always be the favourite of the uninitiated; and better than any of the earlier operas it survives also in the affections of the true Wagnerian. “The Flying Dutchman,” on the other hand, is too primitive and savage in its musical conception to be entirely acceptable to the ordinary musical amateur who has been brought up on musical conventions; it is more appreciated by the advanced Wagnerian than by the beginner; while “Lohengrin,” which is so great a favourite with an ordinary provincial opera audience, seems to me so marred by its awkward modulations, its unreal plot, its uninteresting characterisation, and its almost commonplace employment of the orchestra (which is far less advanced than in its predecessor “Tannhäuser”), that I cannot help regarding it as the least interesting of all Wagner’s works, and on a far lower plane of musical interest than, for example, “Faust” or “Carmen.” I ignore altogether *Das Libesverbot*, *Die Feen*, and *Rienzi*, as the immature, imitative work of an artist whose

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own personality, when it came to be developed, proved him to be so greatly the superior of those whom he had imitated.

There remains "The Mastersingers of Nuremberg," which is, for me at any rate, the greatest and perhaps the ultimate expression in music of a sane, mature joy in life and the world. So much music has been the poignant utterance of youth and passion that we are apt to forget how, in Bach and Beethoven and Wagner, it can also sound the calm diapasons of life, which persist, a broad and calm tide of harmony, beneath all the cries of anguish uttered by passionate souls. In music like this it is not the voices of the storm or the roar of waves or the cries of drowning men that fill our ears; but the steady murmur of a tide that through storm and sunshine obeys one eternal impulse. Youth and growing-time are passionate, selfish, unreasonable, and are capable of acute utterance; but maturity, learned in the true gravity and anguish of things, learns also to veil its knowledge in smiles, and to reconcile discordant voices in a harmony of laughter. So these genial citizens of Nuremberg, with their kindling eyes and flowing beards, their vast sense

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of dignity, their proud joy in handicraft, their deliberate savouring of holiday and festival, remain for all time to remind us of certain tonic truths; to reassure us that maturity and age have rightly their inheritance of joy, and to show that age may give place to youth without bitterness or estrangement.

The work has its undertone of melancholy—what true or beautiful thing has not? A certain sadness is of the very essence of beauty and truth, saving beauty from an inhuman perfection, and making truth endurable in a not entirely happy world. Through all the glowing commotion of “*The Mastersingers*” this grand undertone can be traced. It is in the long solemn modulations of the organ, when the sedate congregation steps slowly out of the church; it is in the very first utterance of Walter, when he asks Eva to decide his life’s bliss or woe for him; it is in the dignified entrance of the Mastersingers, with their greetings and their rules, and their calm worthy satisfaction in simple pleasures; you can laugh at these plain tinsmiths and pewterers and cobblers, but you could cry too—not because they were tinsmiths and pewterers and cobblers, but because they belong to an age when civilisation was a glory

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and not a disease, when labour was a crown and not a penalty. The undertone of melancholy runs through the mellow midsummer evening as it darkens into fragrant night; through the sounds and voices in the street, through the tender love-making beneath the linden tree, through that delicious dialogue between Sachs and Eva when, although their speech runs on in a playful, bantering conversation, the orchestra utters so profoundly the yearning tenderness and sadness of Sachs's renunciation; through the merry-making in the sun-filled meadows, and beneath the glorious hymn of love and honour with which the Nurembergers hail Hans Sachs.

For this is a real world which this fascinating music creates for us; these are real people, called up for us out of a dream, who move and live their happy lives in our sight and hearing. They are real people, I say; by which I mean that they are ideal, fashioned out of the imperishable stuff of thought and emotion. The music cuts the black curtain of time and oblivion, has dominion over them, annihilates them; and shows us the eternal true world of the ideal, where the face of things does not change, where Eva and Walter never grow older or sadder, where friends do not

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part, and where love has no ending or disillusion.

The congregation in St. Katherine's church prayed in their hymn that they might be led gently across the flood of Jordan ; and over the ultimate Jordan that lies between life and art, between the things of circumstance and the things of the spirit, this wonderful music can lead us so gently and kindly that we shall hardly notice the washing away of that self which in life and circumstance is the seat of pain, but is unknown in the world of art and the spirit.

March, 1907.

CHRONOLOGY

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1813		Wagner born at Leipzig, May 22. Was six months old when his father died		Verdi born Dargomijsky born
1814	1			
1815	2	His mother took him to Dresden, having married Ludwig Geyer, an actor		Waterloo Schubert's "Erl-könig"
1816	3			Sir Walter Scott's "Waverley" Rossini's "Il Barbiere" Sterndale Bennett born
1817	4			Gade born
1818	5			Gounod born
1819	6			Spontini's "Olympia" Clara (Wieck) Schumann born
1820	7	His stepfather, Geyer, died		Herbert Spencer born
1821	8			Weber's "Der Freischütz" Keats died Napoleon died

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1822	9	Entered the Kreuz- schule, Dresden		Shelley died César Franck born Liszt's first public appearance as a pianist at Vienna
1823	10			Beethoven's "Choral Symphony" Weber's "Eury- anthe"
1824	11		Wrote a tragedy after the Greek style	Smetana born Byron died Lord Kelvin born
1825	12			Boïeldieu's "La Dame Blanche" Huxley born
1826	13			Weber's "Oberon" Weber died
1827	14	Studied under Gott- lieb Müller		Beethoven died
1828	15	Placed in the Nico- laïschule, Leipzig		Schubert died Rossetti born Ibsen born
1829	16	Attended the Tho- masschule, Leipzig		Rossini's "Tell" Mendelssohn's pro- duction of Bach's "St. Matthew Pas- sion" Chopin in Paris Millais born
1830	17	Entered University of Leipzig for a short time. Studied counterpoint under Theodor Weinlig	Overture in B flat performed under Dorn	Auber's "Fra Di- avolo" First performance of Berlioz's "Sym- phonie Fantas- tique" in December

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in <i>Italics</i>)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1831	18		Opus 1, Sonata in B flat. Concert overture with fugue Polonaise for four hands Overture in D minor,	Beilini's "La Sonnambula" Herold's "Zampa" Meyerbeer's "Robert le Diable"
1832	19	Went to Vienna, and returned to Leipzig via Prague	Symphony in C major Fantasia in F sharp minor (not published) Overture "Polonia" Libretto of "Die Hochzeit"	Goethe died Clementi died Beilini's "Norma"
1833	20	Chorus master at Wurzburg	"Die Feen" Symphony produced at Leipzig	Herold died Brahms born
1834	21	At Magdeburg	Began "Das Liebesverbot"	Donizetti's "Lucia di Borgia" Boieldieu died Schumann founded "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" Borodin born
1835	22	Kapellmeister at Königsberg	Overture to "Columbus" Songs to "Der Berggeist"	Donizetti's "Lucia" Halévy's "Die Judin" Bellini died Saint-Saëns born
1836	23	Married Minna Planer, actress	Production of "Das Liebesverbot" "Rule Britannia" overture	Meyerbeer's "Huguenots" Adam's "Le Postillon de Longjumeau" Mendelssohn's "St. Paul"

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1837	24	Kapellmeister at Riga	Text of comic opera, "Die Glückliche Bärenfamilie"	Swinburne born Constable died
1838	25		Working at "Rienzi," till 1840	Lortzing's "Czar und Zimmermann" Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" Bizet born
1839	26	Spent a week in London <i>en route</i> for Paris, where he lived till 1842 Met Meyerbeer at Boulogne	"Die beiden Grenadiere" "Dors, mon enfant" "Mignonne" "Attente"	First performance of Berlioz's "Romeo and Juliet"
1840	27	At Paris	"Der Tannenbaum" Drei Romanzen "Ein Faust Overture"	Lortzing's "Hans Sachs" Donizetti's "La Favorita" Tschaikowsky born
1841	28	Removed to Meudon	Pianoforte score of Halévy's "Ronde Chypre," "Guitarero" and others "Une Visite à Beethoven" Contributions to the "Gazette Musicale," Paris Finished music to "Der fliegende Holländer" "Columbus" performed in Paris	Dvořák born
1842	29	Hofkapellmeister at Dresden	First performance of "Rienzi" at Dresden under Wagner	Cherubini died Sullivan born

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1843	30		First performance of "Der fliegende Holländer" at Dresden under Wagner "Das Liebesmahl der Apostel" at Dresden	Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" Schumann's "Paradise and the Peri" Grieg born Balfe's "Bohemian Girl"
1844	31		"Am Weber's Grabe," Dresden Production of "Der fliegende Holländer" at Berlin	Flotow's "Stradella" Berlioz's "Instrumentation" Rimsky Korsakoff born
1845	32	At work on "Lohengrin," till 1848	First performance of "Tannhäuser" under Wagner, Dresden	Vincent Wallace's "Maritana"
1846	33			Mendelssohn's "Elijah" Berlioz's "Faust"
1847	34			Mendelssohn died Flotow's "Martha" Liszt Hofkapellmeister at Weimar
1848	35		"Lohengrin" completed First step towards "The Ring" "Siegfried's Tod" text	Donizetti died Schumann's "Manfred" Second French Republic
1849	36	Involved in political agitation: went to Weimar, then to Paris. Left Paris for Zürich, in which last place he became a naturalized Swiss subject	"Die Kunst und die Revolution"	Chopin died Nicolai's "Merry Wives of Windsor"

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1850	37		First performance of "Lohengrin" under Liszt at Weimar <i>"Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft"</i> <i>"Das Judenthum in der Musik"</i>	Schumann's "Genu- eva"
1851	38	Friendship with Ma- thilde von Wesen- donck	<i>"Oper und Drama"</i> <i>"Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde"</i>	Verdi's "Rigoletto" Spontini died Turner died Schopenhauer's "Parerga und Paralipomena"
1852	39		<i>"Über die Auffüh- rung des Fann- häuser"</i> Piano score of "Lo- hengrin" published	
1853	40		Album Sonata Complete text of "The Ring" pub- lished privately	Verdi's "Il Trova- tore" and "La Traviata"
1854	41	Came under the in- fluence of Schopen- hauer	"Rheingold" fin- ished "Die Walküre" be- gun First sketches of music for "Sieg- fried"	
1855	42	Conducted Philhar- monic Concerts in London Scoring "Die Wal- küre" at 22, Port- land Terrace, Re- gent's Park		

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1856	43	At Zurich	Full score of "Die Walküre" finished	Schumann died
1857	44		Act I and part of Act II of "Siegfried" finished "Tristan" begun; poem finished, Act I scored	
1858	45			Cornelius' "Barber of Bagdad"
1859	46	At Venice in March, at Lyons in August, and at Paris in September	"Tristan" completed: Act II at Venice, Act III at Lyons	Gounod's "Faust" Meyerbeer's "Dinorah" Spohr died
1860	47	Three concerts in Paris and Berlin	"Fünf Gedichte" "Zukunftsmusik"	Gounod's "Philemon et Baucis"
1861	48	Disastrous production of "Tannhäuser" at Paris Heard "Lohengrin" for the first time at Vienna, thirteen years after its completion	"Albumblatt"	
1862	49	Ban of Exile raised in March. Living at Biebrich-am-Rhein	Working at "Die Meistersinger" Poem privately printed	Debussy born
1863	50	Living in Vienna (Penzing)	"The Ring" published as a "literary product"	Rubenstein's "Fetters" Thackeray died
1864	51	Ludvig II of Bavaria presented him with a villa at Starnberg Naturalized as Bavarian subject	"Huldigungsmarsch" written "Über Staat und Religion"	Richard Strauss born Meyerbeer died

DATE	AGE	EVENTS OF LIFE	WORKS (Prose works in italics)	CONTEMPORARY EVENTS
1865	52		Pianoforte score of "Die Walküre" published First performance of "Tristan" under Von Bülow, Munich	
1866	53	Minna Wagner died		Thomas's "Mignon"
1867	54	September 1, left Munich for Vevey, and later settled at Tribschen, near Lucerne, remain- ing there till he re- moved to Bayreuth in 1872	Full score of "Die Meistersinger" completed	Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet"
1868	55		First performance of "Die Meister- singer" at Munich under von Bülow on June 21	Boïto's "Mephis- tofele" Rossini died Brahms' "German Requiem"
1869	56	Siegfried Wagner born Bayreuth settled up- on as the locality for his theatre	Full score of "Sieg- fried" finished First performance of "Rheingold" at Munich <i>"Über das Beglei- tung"</i>	Berlioz died Dargomijsky died
1870	57	Married Cosima von Bülow	Finished Prelude and Act I of "Göt- terdämmerung" First performance of "Der fliegende Holländer" in England First performance of "Die Walküre" at Munich Collected writings and poems pub- lished	Dickens died Balfe died Franco-Prussian War

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1871	58		"Kaisermarsch" "Siegfried Idyll" <i>"Über die Aufführung des Bühnen-Festspiels: Der Ring des Nibelungen,"</i> published in March Pianoforte score of "Siegfried" published in July	Verdi's "Aïda" William I Kaiser Third French Republic Auber died
1872	59	Took up his abode at Bayreuth on April 24 Foundations of Theatre begun on April 29; foundation stone laid in May		
1873	60			
1874	61		The orchestration of "Götterdämmerung" finished in November	Peter Cornelius died Verdi's "Requiem"
1875	62		First performance of "Lohengrin" in England Albumblatt in E flat	Sterndale Bennett died Bizet's "Carmen"
1876	63		First performance of "The Ring" at Bayreuth under Richter First performance of "Tannhäuser" in England Centennial March for Philadelphia	Goetz died Brahms' "First Symphony"
1877	64	Visited London for a "Wagner Festival" at the Albert Hall	Poem of "Parsifal" published in December	Saint-Saëns' "Samson and Delilah"

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1878	65		Contributed to "Bayreuther Blät- ter," the journal of the Wagner Verein Music of "Parsifal" begun	
1879	66		Sketch of music for "Parsifal" com- pleted in January First performance of "Rienzi" in Eng- land	
1880	67			Offenbach died
1881	68			
1882	69	Was at Palermo in January Went to Venice in the winter	Full score of "Par- sifal" finished in January First performance of "Parsifal" at Bay- reuth in July Private performance in Venice of Sym- phony in C on Christmas Eve [vide 1832] First performance of "Tristan" in England First performance of "Die Meister- singer" in England First performance of "The Ring" in England	Raff died Gounod's "Redemp- tion"
1883	70	Died on February 13 at Venice, Pa- lazzo Vendramini Buried at "Wahn- fried," Bayreuth.		Dvořák's "Stabat Mater"